

THE
BERTRAM FAMILY
COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS
TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 1604.

THE BERTRAM FAMILY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

1875.

The Family Tauchnitz Edition

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

By the same Author,

CHRONICLES OF THE SCHÖNBERG-COTTA FAMILY	2 vols.
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BY THE AUTHOR OF

"CHRONICLES OF THE SCHÖNBERG-COTTA FAMILY."

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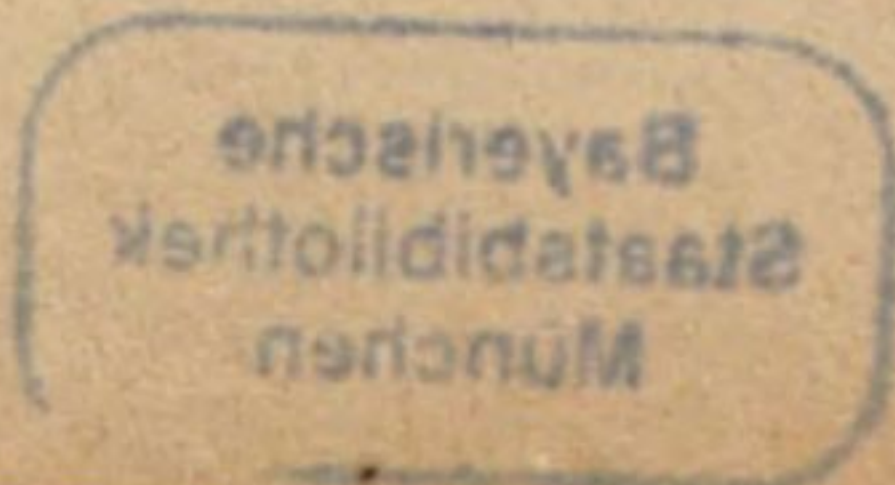
VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

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THE BERTRAM FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

Margaret's Note-book.

"PERHAPS one day something will happen to us," I wrote in this book such a short time since.

How childish the creature seems who could have written that! How far off the time seems when it could have been written!

I never dreamt of anything happening but to us all together.

In fact, I think we none of us really believed in death. I wonder if any one ever does until it comes and lays life waste, and opens the dreadful chasm at our very feet.

I wonder about so many things. It is strange. But it seems as if Monica and I had changed places. Her distractions and perplexities seem smitten into

harmony, as if an electric flash had passed through them, and made them a unity in her heart. The world seemed so difficult and incomprehensible to her before; and now she seems to see through things to the light, as if death for her had rent the veil instead of drawing it closer.

Whilst, to me, the terrible realities seem almost as if they had now began to exist. I suppose what Austin used to call her way of looking at things in the abstract, and mine of seeing them in the concrete, has to do with it; or rather the character which made us do it. She saw the perplexities and chaos underneath the sunny haze of our own bright home life. And now the sunshine is gone, I seem to have fallen into the chaos, whilst she has reached beyond to the Spirit brooding over it, and the order working out through it.

I cannot see any meaning or good in this desolation. I do try to bow, and to feel it is only my childishness. But I always did see meaning and good in everything before. At least, I thought I did, and I suppose I took that for faith.

And now that I have to trust absolutely that God

is good, without a glimpse how the anguish He has sent can be good, it is a very different thing.

There is mother! what did she want to make her better? And how can it make her better, or any of us, to have one so just, and wise, and good, who loved God, and all of us so dearly, taken from us?

We always felt he was a hallowing, inspiring presence in our home. And how are we to turn round in a moment, and hope we are to be better without it?

Some one said something dreadful, the other day, about God smiting idols. But he was no idol to any of us. "Hands have they, and handle not; feet have they, and walk not; neither speak they." And he was always lifting up hands that hang down—he was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and the voice that spoke answers to all our perplexities; and in tender rebuke to all that was wrong, and in ennobling sympathy with all that was feebly struggling upwards.

Idols are some thing, or dream, that we make

and worship for our own selfish sakes, and that cannot help us.

He was a being God had made and taught, that we loved for his own sake, and for God and duty's sake, who helped us at every turn.

And it is not as if it were only ourselves. It is the whole parish. How he loved and how he laboured for them! How he watched, and waited, and toiled, and planned for one wandering, tempted soul! And how he rejoiced when any came back, and overcame anything evil! And how he sustained and trusted, through failure after failure, until the victory became sure!

"Overcoming evil with good."

And now, if the holiest man in the world comes among the people instead, they cannot be his people in the same sense, for so long. Divine power cannot create twenty years.

And he might so easily have had twenty years of such work longer!

How the poor did mourn for him! People that we never knew had cared for what he said and did.

Can that be a glimpse of the meaning? Can it? Would they really have so cared but for this? If it might be given to me to see a little bit of good springing out of it for some one, I think I could bear it so much better. Because I have so little imagination. Because, then I know, *he* would be satisfied. And I can never think Paradise itself would satisfy him unless he felt it was good for *us* he should be there.

He *could* not have wished to go.

* * * * *

I had written so far when mother came in and found me crying bitterly.

She looked at the last words, and taking my hands in hers, she said,—

“No, Margaret, I believe he did not wish to go.”

“Oh mother,” I said, “how can we bear it, if it was not even good for him?”

“My child,” she replied, “it is infinitely better for him. I am sure of that. I live on that.”

And her dear pale, worn, heavenly face looks as if she did.

“But he did not wish it,” she continued. “How

could he? Would not any physician choose to stay and help the sick rather than go to a land where there is no sickness? The sick, whose diseases and sufferings he knows, and is helping to cure?"

"And had he not *us*? What is Paradise compared to a wilderness where we can open fountains in the rock for people we love dying of thirst?"

I looked up at her, bewildered.

Then the tears, so rare with her, gathered and fell; and her lips quivered.

"I know what you are feeling about it," she said. "It was all but intolerable to me, until a voice seemed to say, 'Would not you have had him drink of the cup I drank of, and be baptized with the baptism I was baptized with?' And then it all shone in on me. Not Paradise itself, *because it is Paradise* is better, *but the will of God is best*. I saw it at last for him. And then another thought came, Margaret. *He sees it now for me*—for us. The will of God. Doubt it, you are in chaos. Resist it, you are in hell. Bow with your whole heart and soul to it, you are steeped in the peace of heaven. For what makes heaven? 'I delight to do Thy will.'"

"I see that God's will must be best for him. I see that he sees the will of God must be best for us. And that does really hold me up, like a strong living hand."

And she is upheld, and upholds us all.

Then she kissed me, and went away.

But before she left she turned back and said, "It is not a *thought* that will uphold you, Margaret; not even *that* thought within your heart, except for a time. It is the will outside you, above you, not your own will, but *God actually there, always*, moulding your will to His."

And now that she has left, it seems to me it is just possible that, even for her, something of strength, not weakness, ennobling, not lowering, may come, even out of this.

And it is a comfort to think we need not choose it, only take it; that even *he* did not—but went before us in this dreadful path, also, as in so many difficult or pleasant paths before.

Weak that I am, I prayed to see. And it seems as if God had given me to see,—to see Jesus, shining through my mother's life and look.

CHAPTER II.

Margaret's Note-book (*continued*).

WE met in the summer parlour to-night to decide what must be done.

Mother thinks we may refuse — that is, really ought to refuse—all the generous offers that have been made to take care of us, and provide education and everything for us, in various homes of our relations. She thinks the family is a sacred divine institution, and that we are a family still. And she says we must hold each other's hands all the tighter, because holding tight is all there is to bind us together, now.

This is a great comfort, to feel that we have a right, that is, a duty, to act as a family still. Some people seemed to think we were a flock without a shepherd, to be drafted off into other people's flocks.

A flock must be scattered abroad, and become some one else's, if the shepherd is smitten.

But we are not a flock, but a family; and father remains our father always, and has most surely not learned to love us and to care for us less, mother is sure, being where he is, and what he is, and with Whom.

And we all feel that we have to carry on father's life.

But in order to be a family, we must separate for a time.

Monica is going to the Felix-Hunters for a time to live in their house, near Hyde Park, as their governess. Dora and Dorothy are going to Germany and France, to connections of ours there, to learn French and German more perfectly. Austin is to be at Oxford, and Eustace is to live partly at Aunt O'Brien's, to prepare for the civil service examination. And mother, May, and I, are to take possession of a village school-house, not far from Aunt Katharine's, where I am to be schoolmistress.

This last plan is strongly objected to by some of

the relations. Aunt Katharine considers it Quixotic, but does not oppose.

But I think, although we might have income enough without, it would take away that dreadful feeling of drifting, which seems to seize us whenever we think of leaving the old home, if I had a positive employment binding me to time and place. It would give some of the sense of necessary regularity of hours, and interchange of enforced rest and work, which help to make a home so much more solid in which there are men going in and out. And mother thinks she might find it a help to have May's education thrown on her.

And all this is only temporary, tending to the hope of our having a home again together one day, perhaps in London, where we girls might perhaps go out to various work, and the boys now and then be with us, Austin perhaps always. We think of a middle-class school. Our life has given us so much sympathy with the struggles of the lower middle class.

And meantime mother has such a passionate love of the country, of the quiet, the fresh air, the

beautiful things coming and going without our providing, that we think it may soothe her to live near a village for a little while. She has, we all think, just a little look of strain, now and then, as if it would do her good to be folded in quiet for a while. She will not spare herself, or have anything given up which she thinks binds us together as a family.

Even the Sunday evening singing which we always had together she could not bear that we should let drop.

"Least of all," she said, "ought we to drop the hymns. In those we are sure we are sharing what he delights in."

And I do think that is becoming the happiest and most sacred thing we do, terrible as it was at first.

Even Austin's face seems to brighten a little, then. And his grief seems more impenetrable than any.

I wonder if it is easier or harder to have to break up our home.

Very often I feel as if lodgings here, like those

mother and her father used to have over Mr. Treherne's the greengrocer, would be better than the loveliest home anywhere else in the world.

Anywhere else we shall begin, grown-up, rounded-off atoms. Here we have always the childhood in us to people's hearts and imaginations; the childhood, and the heritage of father's work.

Monica says she thinks it matters comparatively little which form the sorrow takes, having to live on in the home unroofed, or having to go out from it into the world without a roof. The roof is really off. The blessed, sacred, perfect home is gone. And the roof for us has become the great starry roof of the world.

But to me all the familiar things, and places, and people are so much parts of ourselves, that it seems to make a great difference.

And the people are so sorry.

While we remain, they say, it seems as if father must be coming back. And I believe something of that delusion now and then is on me.

The old woman with the "sweety" shop, we used to make wonderful varieties of toffy for in the Long

Room, cocoa-nut and monkey-nut and almond, showed me yesterday the remains of a store of battledores and shuttlecocks Walter had made for her.

"The feathers won't stick in those I buy now," she said, "and the children say they will go to the shop in the High Street."

Poor, pathetic, little, cheap, rude toys, which the children look longingly at many a time before they can raise the farthings to buy them, no wonder the dearly-bought treasures are subject to keen inspection.

Yet even in these alleys how often we have seen the children

"Fretted by sallies of their mothers' kisses,
With light upon them from their fathers' eyes!"

Happy little ones, in any alley, for whom that light is not quenched!

How the sympathy of the people has gone to our hearts! I cannot tell how to express what I feel about this sympathy of the poor with our troubles. Mrs. Mowlem's took a strange form.

"Miss Margaret," she said, "I'm going straight

to the workhouse. The world is too strong for me, my dear, what with the weakness of my stomach, and the gin palaces so convenient. I never thought to do it. But I shall be safe there. And I've set my heart on giving satisfaction to poor dear master and missis and Miss Lavinia, at last."

So to the workhouse she went, as a refuge from temptation and a house of humiliation, a kind of religious order and retreat which perhaps it constitutes for not a few.

The Divine Rule is not without its hair-shirts and scourges, and its discipline of silence and strict seclusion.

And Fan has promised to go and read the Bible to her sometimes there.

The Belgian priest who works among the Irish told Austin something which touched us much. He took Austin into his rooms, and showed him a little row of French Roman Catholic books which father had given him. Père Gratry's "Les Sources," and some sermons of Lacordaire's, and Pascal's "Pensées," and some ecclesiastical histories of Ozanam's, and

among them De Pressensé's "Le Rédempteur," for which one of the three assassinated Archbishops of Paris is said to have given special thanks to the author, as an answer to Renan's "Vie de Jésus."

"He knew we are not rich!" the Belgian said. "I read these books often. Ah, we can never hope too much from the charity of God. The sacrifice of the Lord is immeasurable. Invincible ignorance! a blameless life! Alas! which of us will not need purgatorial fires? And are not all fires tempered by the mercy of God?"

The minister of Ebenezer, also, a particular Baptist, and under impressions that the mercy of God and the redemption of Christ have considerable limitations, one of the extremest section, stopped Eustace in the street.

"You would not think it any disrespect that I could not attend your father's funeral." (Ministers and members of all other sects did.) "Poor dear gentleman, there were many things he was never able to see into, *here*. We had many discussions. But I could never move him; and of course, thank

God, he could not move me. But he did better than most who see farthest. And no doubt he sees farther than any of us now; farther than any of us!" And having so delivered his conscience, Eustace said his heart trembled in his voice, as he added, "Yes, surely now, dear man, he sees further than any of us. For he *went* a good way farther than most of us, in holiness, even here."

Then the gifts, the parting gifts, how they went to our hearts; so precious, because so small; so immeasurably much, because so inevitably little. And the delicacy in the choice of which of us they were given to.

A great number were showered upon May; a leather collar and chain for Dot from the old saddler, a little model ship from one of Walter's boys, with the hope she would find a pool to sail it in; a Japan workbox that a widow's son had brought home from foreign parts, the one ornament of her poor bare room.

There was no formal presentation from the parish. The home was to be broken up. And to

them it had always seemed so full and fair. But there was one request, to be allowed to have father's photograph copied.

And after we left, there came down to mother the loveliest jewel case, with a miniature from this photograph set in a gold locket, massive, but most delicately designed and finished.

The dear people, distrusting their own taste, and bent on having the very best, to meet my mother's, had gone to the most expensive and artistic jeweller they could hear of in the "West End."

And oh the flowers laid on him, at last; costly wreaths, as at a royal funeral, violets from children's hands.

There at least they knew there could be no refusal, no pain in taking what had cost the giver much.

And who dared say the alabaster box and the precious ointment were wasted?

Which of our treasures is *not* wasted, except those of which love gets the distribution?

To me there seems something sublime in the disinterestedness and generosity of this sympathy of the poor.

Such sorrow as ours would have brought many of them to the threshold of the workhouse, to want of daily bread. But they seem to think it merely natural that they should suffer, and strange that we should.

When some portion of the heavy burden falls on us, we moan and wonder and count it strange, as if some strange thing happened unto us; but on the poor the yoke rests with an unquestioned familiarity, and is accepted with a brave unconscious patience which must, I think, go far to assimilate them to the likeness of Him who as a sheep before his shearers was dumb.

Good was the path father and mother chose twenty years, low in the valley, among the toilers and sufferers.

Never may my lot be on the dreary, icy heights, away from them and their burdens. Never *shall* it be, please God. Never can we lose the links

these twenty years of father's life have wrought for us with those who are with us always, through whom we may minister to Him with whom our father is now for ever.

CHAPTER III.

Winifred's Moan-book.

FAN has been sitting with me to-day, with her baby, in the old rock-garden by the fountain, where first we met, when I first heard her voice plaintively appealing through the gate,—

“Please, lady, give me a flower.”

One of the lives Maurice has helped to change and raise! “For what is our joy and crown of rejoicing? Are not even *ye*, in the presence of our Lord at His coming?” Yes, “even *ye*,” *i.e.* simply seeing those we have tried to help, saved, good, and blessed for ever. No heavenly decorations; no glory set visibly on *us*; simply *simply seeing them there*, and wondering that the little we did helped to bring them there, and wondering more that our Lord, who did so much to bring them there, recognises our poor fellow-working.

Joy shared between us and them, the saved; and between us and Him, the Saviour.

Oh! is our Maurice indeed reaping this?

Fan has stepped into the large and wealthy place now, and we into the shadow and the ravine.

Life has widened for her and brightened. God has given her the best flowers and fruits of this life. For us this is a time of pruning. And pruning means bare wounded branches; not flowers only, but rich visible promise of fruit, apparently ruthlessly cut off and thrown away.

We make too much, I think, sometimes, of the distinction between poverty and riches, since death impoverishes and life enriches all alike; since the joys and sorrows, the temptations and victories, are common to us all, and it is only the cares and pleasures which are different; and since labour, to be worth anything among rich or poor must be hard enough and continuous enough to tire us. Only in the sweat of our brow can any of us eat our true bread.

The dear old nest by the riverside is empty. Do we not all know that nests only begin to fulfil

their purpose when they are empty? when the nestlings are grown up and fledged, and have flown away, and are working and singing, each in its own place?

What is this whole earth but such a nest?

And what is our England, especially, among the nations, but such a nest?

But how hard it has been to see that nest abandoned! I stayed the last week with them, and helped to dismantle it.

"You understand; for you remember the beginning!" Grace said to me. I felt her sorrow so unapproachable. But she does all she can to let me share it.

"He was yours, sister," she said one day, "before he was mine."

"The thing which tries me," she added, after a pause, "is when people, even the dear children, want to be *more* to me, or *closer* to me, than before; as if any one, as if the whole world could fill the least bit of his place in my heart, or *as if it were empty*. Even what some people say about God filling the void seems to me untrue; as if love were

material substance, and one of its qualities were impenetrability, or as if God were merely an ocean filling up places where something solid is taken away. He is light, vibrating through all the elements; life, living in all life; love, living in all love. He does not need to make room for Himself by making a desert and a desolation. He *made room for Himself, by creating the worlds.* And what we call death is only a dark step into a fuller life. The *emptiness* of my home here does not draw me to God; sometimes it hides Him from me as if it never could be His will it should be. But the *fulness* of *his* life there does. Yes, Winifred, sometimes I think it does."

We were sitting in the summer-parlour late on that last evening in the old home.

The room was uncarpeted, and occupied only with a few packing-cases. The children had gone to sleep, wearied out with the exertions of the day.

The window was open, and in the silence of the night, the rush of the great river swept on to the sea.

Opposite us, on different reaches of the river, rose forests of masts, with shapeless blocks of warehouses lining the various docks.

The moonlight spanned the river with another river of silver cresting the ripples; its edge broken by the black mass of a barge with its glimmering red light, the hearthfire of one of those floating families, as nomad and often as little Christianized, as if they were Bedouins of the desert.

Close beneath us some little boats were swaying about in the tide, and now and then two small figures could be seen clambering from one to another of the empty black coal barges moored to the shore, in search of a night's lodging, or of materials for the day's bread.

I was thinking how the social strata are convulsed and reversed and contorted in our life. If you make the section horizontally, what different formations on the same actual level, primitive, recent, fiery crystallizations, petrified deposits, crumbled soil!

And if you make the section vertically, as here, what centuries of civilisation are co-existing in one;

the nomad barge-families, too often savage as any that the Romans ever found here; the ragged homeless children who have not even such a home as the barge-cabin; the labourers whose voices resound along these shores and among the shipping all day, for whom history and literature are scarcely existent, unless they shine on them through Christianity and in the Bible; and then the shipowners and merchants, whose palaces, built on these foundations, are enriched with all treasures of art, ancient and modern.

And between all these, this family had been a living link all these twenty years.

And this link was now to be severed.

We had been sitting silent some time, hand-in-hand, by the window, when Grace said tenderly, I suppose in answer to some unconscious look or pressure of the hand I held, "You are thinking of something that has to do with me, sister. Tell me. You know I have to put down the portcullis when some people speak, because they try to comfort me; and that is what can scarcely be borne from any one. But never for you."

And I told her my thoughts.

"If this has been done for twenty years, it cannot be broken," she said, "and I think in a measure it has. It cannot be lost for the children, nor for you, nor for me, nor for the people. For surely, surely, whatever he did, he did not preach himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord,—crucified, and redeeming us by the sacrifice of Himself, through love,—in no other way; to be followed by that path, the Way of the Cross, the sacrifice of self through love,—in no other way. I dare not, I dare not, look on the past for a moment as something closed, but only as something beginning, for him and for us."

CHAPTER IV.

Margaret's Note-book.

It is over. The old home is broken up. The places and faces familiar to us from childhood will never more be the natural daily scenery of our lives.

The streets full of toil and traffic, the docks and warehouses gathering men and things from all the world, the broad river bringing daily the sea-water to its banks, and daily bearing men and merchandise on their way to all seas and lands, are exchanged for the quiet monotony of this little inland village of Combe Regis, where the daily incidents are the labourers going forth to their labour and their work until the evening; where the hours are marked by the cocks "crowing in the morn," and the cows coming home to the milking in the evening; where the days are marked by the farmers' wives going to the weekly market at the neighbouring town, and

by the church bells on Sunday; and where the months are marked by ploughing and sowing and reaping, hay-harvest and wheat-harvest, threshing and winnowing, just as they were centuries ago.

There is a feeling of rest about it all. And I feel it much more here in our little house in the village than at Aunt Katharine's. Here we seem under the household rule of Nature, and Nature at our service, in a sweet homely manner I never felt before.

I have to get up quite early to light the fires and to take in the milk, as our little maid only comes for a few hours in the middle of the day.

And the quiet of the morning-time, thus gained, is sweeter to me than anything. Our little garden, the school-house garden, slopes to one of the delicious pattering brooks of the dear west country. A clump of elms stands near, on the other side, inhabited by a colony of rooks; perhaps I should rather say by an aboriginal tribe of rooks, to whom we are as new settlers.

In the thickets of bramble and hazel on the

banks, in the hedges, under the eaves, all kinds of birds have made their nests.

The waking up of all these creatures, with their infantile twitterings, and business-like cawings, and maternal chirpings, and sweet ejaculatory versicles, swelling now and then into the full tide of song, is a delight. For all the songs are indeed songs of praise. *Qui laborat orat*;—and all creatures that are innocently happy praise by the very fact of their happiness.

People who live in large country houses with back courts and stables, smooth-shaven lawns and cut-out symmetrical flower-beds, have little idea, I think, how sweet it is to wake actually amongst nests. One confiding pair of swallows have built under the eaves of mother's window.

And then comes the waking of the village, of the farm-yards on its outskirts, cocks and hens, pigs and calves, with their various modes of indicating the common desire for breakfast, more poetically expressed by the "fowls of the air."

And then the human voices calling, remonstrat-

ing, conversing, greeting, cheering the cattle to their work, calling the poultry to their food.

And by that time my leisure is over for the day. May comes down, we get the breakfast, lay the white cloth on the table in the little bay window, with the fresh eggs and the glass with fresh flowers for mother; and the little French earthenware coffee-pot, and the creamy milk, and the pat of the only true butter in the world, the west-country butter, on a wet vine-leaf; and the Bible for family prayer.

For we still have what we call family prayer, mother and May and I, morning and evening: all the dear names remembered one by one, and the dearest name of all, understood through all; the footsteps we pray for grace to tread in, and the eternal joy we pray to reach.

Our family prayer always seems to me now as if we were offering it in a side chapel (or perhaps sometimes it seems in a crypt chapel) of some great beautiful cathedral where full service is going on above, and our little rill of prayer and praise trickles into the great tide of adoration.

And then we sit down, May and I, in the

window-seat, and mother in the beehive chair; and the contented chirping of birds, for whom the excitement of breakfast and of their morning work are over, and the murmurs of bees, come in, as they circle about the two rows of queenly Annunciation lilies, which, alternately with cabbage and damask roses, border the little straight walk to the front garden-gate.

Not seldom, too, the breakfast is cheered by the appearance of the post-mistress's little boy at the wicket, with our letters, which it is May's prerogative to fetch.

I always had a natural taste for kitchens, especially farm-house best kitchens; and our sitting-room has just the touch of that which I like.

The school-house is a building which Aunt Katharine added on to a small old farm-house.

There is a small second kitchen provided with an orthodox, modern, small kitchen range, with every convenience. But in the front kitchen there is still the old farm-house hearth and open chimney, and at the side the "chlomen oven," heated at intervals with wood, which bakes the sweetest bread in the world.

Besides this, we have a tiny larder and dairy. I had a romantic ambition to make our own butter, but have abandoned it.

In a corner of the garden we have a poultry-house, the inhabitants spending their days in a cheerful mendicant fashion on the road in front of the house.

And up-stairs there are two bedrooms, one with a repetition of the small bay-window, which is mother's and May's; and a small one opening into it, with a casement looking to the east, against which the branches of an old oak occasionally sweep in stormy weather, and where the birds converse and soliloquize, and debate and dispute, and go off into melodious ecstasies, heeding us as little as if we were "fowls of the air" ourselves, and not merely human creatures recommended to "consider" them.

It is a busy life for me.

I like it more and more, now that the children are getting at home with me.

It is delightful to me to have a real relationship to them; to have duties to them as really as their

mothers have, and for which no especial thanks are to be expected; recognised, expected, paid services; not to be coming in among them at intervals from above, but working among them as bound to serve them.

Besides, as Monica has a natural delight in teaching, I believe I have a natural delight in ruling and governing.

I do enjoy arbitrating in their little quarrels, bringing order out of disorder; seeing the refractory little ones, whose instinct is opposition, gradually getting into the atmosphere of submission, and transferring their ambitions into eagerness to give the first answers, and sing the most energetically.

Moreover the teaching, as a part of the governing, grows more and more interesting to me.

The beauty of the New Testament parable teaching is more apparent here, where one has not, as often in London, to teach both sides of the parable; where, instead of cornfields and lilies of the field needing as much explanation as the lessons drawn from them, Nature herself takes up the parable, and, as at the first, we see the fields "white

already to harvest," and are called on all sides by their own voices to "consider the fowls of the air."

Not that my heart is unfaithful to the dear toiling people of our old London parish. Ah! too much, too much, I fear, my heart is there; and the cheerful things I try to see and do see and commend to myself in our lot here are like a mother singing lullabies to a fretful child.

The rosy round faces here cannot have for me the pathos and interest of many of the sharp, pale, little faces there.

Here, one has to wake up every one, children and older people, to find out that there are any questions to be asked.

There, the questions came readily enough, pressing hard, even on infancy, in the struggles, and problems, and social contrasts of the Great City. And it is certainly more interesting to have to teach by answering questions than by waking people up to ask them.

At least it is so to me. I am too much given to take things easily myself, to take everything for granted, as they do. Falling asleep is rather too

much my own danger, under the sweet monotonous hum of all this regularity of natural life.

And yet even here, in this remote corner of England, it is not slumbrous, as I fancy it must be in some inland nooks in the midland districts.

Scarcely a family but has some relations in Australia or in America. The post-mistress has an uncle who was one of the West country Wesleyan founders and law-makers, like the old Greek colonists, of the Vigilance Committee of San Francisco.

And some have cousins—fishermen and seamen; and there are families of miners.

Everywhere the *Wandertrieb* of our race, which replenishes the earth and subdues it, confronts us; the imperial motherly destiny of our England, which makes every nook of her quiet valleys an inlet into the wide world; every one of her tranquil homesteads a possible school for new nations; every family in her farms, or villages, or parsonages, or manor-houses a possible family of founders.

There is no inland isolated life in England. We are too truly an island, and have taken up our island

destinies, I think, too widely, ever to lead a life of isolation.

Nevertheless, how my heart goes back to the narrow streets and the alleys and courts of the old London parish!

Here, the people are like mountaineers on a solitary height overlooking a wide world. There, it seemed sometimes too much like their being at the bottom of a blind alley—a *cul-de-sac* from which there was no escape.

There is not a corner of England so remote as to be out of the great currents which are ceaselessly moving men hither and thither into the cities, into the wildernesses, across the seas, to colonise, to conquer.

It is the great city itself in which the population seems sometimes to become a hopeless stagnant sediment. There is no back eddy from the dark corners of London into the country. Family after family is sucked into the great whirlpool from village, and mountain, and country town; and scarcely one returns; at least, of the unsuccessful. If the golden hopes of the great city fail, they are buried in some of its own dark depths, not carried back to

be pitied and lamented among friends and neighbours in the old home.

And the second generation of the city-born-and-bred has scarcely energy, or general practical knowledge enough, to be fit for any field of emigration.

English villages have outlets into all quarters of our English-speaking world, and training for all kinds of available work anywhere. But London, for the very poor, ends in itself. It is in London that there are those terrible desert shores strewn with wrecks, which can never be floated more; and it is just this which has made our parting from the old parish so inexpressibly sad.

There were so many there whom the misfortune or sin of others, or their own, had drifted into some obscure corner, some bare attic or dark cellar, from which there was no door of hope in this world, and where we were looked for like the sunshine, which never came to them in any other form.

And another thing, I think, which makes me so often long to be there again, is that our father's work was so essentially a work of sympathy, rather of benevolence. He gave himself, his very self, to

the people, entering into their perplexities and sorrows, and bearing their burdens. And that kind of work, whilst it cannot be exhibited, or made reports of, and because it cannot, cannot be taken up by other people. The hearts that had been slowly opened to him, and, through all those years, had learned to trust him, cannot find another the same.

It is all this, I fear, that speaks in mother's eyes, as she sits sometimes in the twilight with that far-off look, which makes one feel so terribly that she belongs to us no more, try as she may to make us think she belongs to us twice as much.

All this, and no doubt tenfold more, which no one on earth can translate any more. It is only in the twilight that she sits so. At other times she allows herself no leisure.

That makes me anxious! She does not seem able to trust herself with leisure. And I never see her eyes linger with the old fond delight on sunset, or flowers, or on any of the beautiful things she so loved.

She points things out to me, and especially to

May; but it sounds too much as if she were tenderly explaining a child's picture-book.

Sometimes I think, if she could have some kind of illness that would not be very painful, or dangerous, but oblige her to give up, and rest, it might help her.

The sorrow is so unfathomable, and she is struggling so bravely through it, trying to bear us all up with her. And sometimes I feel as if it would be better if for a time all the billows and waves went over her, and then God's hand brought her back.

CHAPTER V.

The Mother's Note-book.

ONCE more in the country; for the first time really living in the country, not here for a holiday. We did not come here for any poor pretence of pleasure, but for work, because it seemed the thing appointed for the time.

I am not required to try to enjoy anything. I just have to be here, among the beautiful hills, and woods, and sea shores, just as I might have had to live in a solitary house in a suburban field which the brick-makers in the next field are gradually preparing to make into rows of houses, among those hapless green places which the great monster *ingens, informe* is slowly coiling round and swallowing and transforming into its own substance.

At first it seemed so terribly like that! As if the home had been swept, and rased, and ploughed

into the earth, and we set down in the middle of just such a brick-field to construct another.

But this was only one of the countless spectral delusions of that land, this land, of darkness and the shadow of death.

And then a Voice, the voice we knew and listened to, listen to still *together*, seemed to say—

“You have not to construct the new life. The Builder and Maker, here and there, is God. You have not to plan out the new road. There is no road but My footsteps. You have only, as always, to follow Me.”

That was help.

But oh, how it pierces my heart when these dear children try to make me happy, especially when I see Margaret's tender eyes wistfully watching me to see if I am enjoying the beautiful things in earth, and sea, and sky!

How curiously sorrow opens one's perceptions to the people who have sympathy!

The most intolerable people are those who fancy they have universal sympathy, and can fathom every sorrow. Used I to be one of those?

I thought I understood many things, and could comfort many sorrows. But now it seems to me, to comfort sorrow is just the thing I could never venture to do again. It seems to me as if I had never known in the least what sorrow is.

Soft tender regrets for those who leave us when life is done; stirrings of pity which is only half pain; wrongs to those we love, which rouse all the strength in us to sustain them; these make us LIVE, live a fuller and deeper life.

But sorrow, real sorrow, is not life, it is death. It takes the life out of us, it crushes, impoverishes, silences, maims, kills.

The Bible calls it *fire*.

And whatever the fire may do for us in the end, while we are in it, it *burns*, burns us. And people (*we*, until we know) have all kinds of instructive illustrations about the metal and the dross, and gold being purified in the fire; and they come to the furnace door and ask us *how we are feeling* in the fire; they hope we are sustained, and say it is sure to be purifying us.

Sustained? We, *we*, are being burned!

Purified? We feel as if we were having all the evil in us vivified, and all the good searched and tried and found corruptible.

They trust they see One with us like the Son of Man, and that with Him the fire has no power to hurt a hair of our head.

Thank God, He knows!

He passed through the fire and knows it. Not unscathed He went through it, not unscathed He came out of it. Victorious; but through anguish, and in anguish, and over anguish.

And then there are the people who expect you to sit still and have balms poured upon you. As if sorrow were sickness, were a bodily wound. Those illustrations, how we entangle ourselves with them! Pain, bodily pain, *is* bodily pain, and can be lulled or cured; a wound *is* a wound, and can be soothed or healed; loss of fortune *is* loss of fortune, and can be met by economy or work. But sorrow is not a bodily disease, or a wound, or a temporal loss. It is just *sorrow*. Bereavement *is* bereavement, and nothing else. You cannot soothe it, or lull it, or cure it, or remove or escape, or get over it. Its es-

sence is that it is irremediable; that it cannot change into something else.

And so, instead of sitting down and having balm poured on us, the only thing to do is to rise up, and fight the good fight, and overcome; to grasp the terrible pain to our heart, and endure it, accepting it from God; and to get strength meanwhile from Him to do what has to be done for others.

For there is *death* in sorrow; death to the heart. And to this we must not, dare not yield. We must not let it paralyze us.

For *they* are living; not dead. And life, not death, associates us with them.

It is all so different from what I should have thought.

God means, yes, *means* us to suffer; means us to be in the fire.

He is love. He loves us. I am sure of it. But what I *feel* is not the love, but the fire.

He knows what is really good for us. I am sure He is doing right, has made no mistake, although it seems on this earthly side entirely wrong for us all, and for me above all.

I would hasten on through the terrible lessons if I could. But I cannot. And I cannot learn the lessons through other people's words. I cannot pretend to myself to be one step beyond the point I have actually reached.

And that is just the sense of being in the fire, and giving myself up, there, to God, to do His will in me and with me.

It did comfort me yesterday to hear Aunt Katharine say to Margaret, who was crying, poor darling, I believe about me,—

“My dear, be patient. Adolphe Monod said, ‘*Les choses ne vont pas si vite.*’ ”

Yes, God will be patient with me, I know, and I must try to be patient with myself.

CHAPTER VI.

The Mother's Note-book (*continued*).

THANK God, I live again; yes, really *live* as I never thought possible, on this earth, more.

The power of death is overcome.

Sorrow remains. But death is overcome, even for me.

I knew always that Maurice lived, felt it; that death was no *state* in which he existed, but a moment's change through which he had passed into life. But it seemed that *I* had ceased to live;—that I was dead; at least, as far as I was conscious of anything—that was what I felt.

Looking back, I see this.

For, all the time I thought myself struggling and pressing through the waves, they had gone over me.

I was numb, and deaf, and blind.

I knew God loved; but I could not feel it. I knew the world was beautiful; but I could not taste

it. I knew the children were dear and worth living for; but I could not feel anything was worth living for.

Numb, and deaf, and dumb, and blind, all that can be meant by a living heart being dead, sorrow was to me.

I used to wonder if any one had ever felt like it before, or if it always went on so; because I knew I had, bodily, to live and not die. And yet this living and not living seemed almost impossible to go on with long.

And then came that merciful illness; the fever I caught in helping to nurse one of Margaret's school-children. I would not have encountered it intentionally, because I knew I had to live for the children. But the little fellow was motherless, and one day he sate with his head drooping on his breast, and I saw him, and naturally took him on my knee to soothe him. So that when on the next day it was pronounced fever, the peril having been encountered, I was free to go and help the helpless little one.

And so, I caught the fever.

Other people may be stronger and braver than I, and struggle all the way consciously through.

God knew what I could bear, and sent me *sleep*, a helpless illness which was like a sleep to heart, and mind, and spirit; and then He bore me through, like a sleeping child, in His arms.

Days and nights which had little distinction; restlessness which was not of the heart but of the body, and when there was no thinking possible, only strange visions floating around me.

No possibility of struggling, or of doing anything for any one, or of hiding any pain from any one; no duty of overcoming, or of *seeming* to overcome so as not to weaken any one else's faith.

Nothing to do but to let every one help me and serve me, and to take food and medicine when they were given me; and now and then to try to say something which would make the children not feel anxious about me, which usually, on the contrary, made the one I was trying to comfort begin to cry, a failure which I was too weak to enter into. For they were anxious about my life, which I never was,

I felt so sure, from the beginning, that I had to live, and take care of them all.

Only, now, I had to be taken care of, in order to live.

I knew they were watching me with intense anxiety, longing, praying that I might be spared to them; so that any improvement sent a thrill of hope through them all, and every unfavourable symptom overwhelmed them with unspeakable dread.

I knew, in some curious, dim way, that they were all near me, although I never saw any but Margaret and Monica. They were so anxious not to agitate me by letting me know they had all been sent for. I knew what their anxiety was, by the calm in Monica's manner, and by the tender playfulness in Margaret's.

I had become as their child to them, and I liked it, and I felt I would not on any account have had them know how little the peril which so distressed them would have agitated me. Partly because of my conviction that I had to live; and partly because for a long time I could not wish anything about it.

I dared not wish to die and go home, and I could not wish to live.

Until, one summer morning, through a little window at the side of my bed, waking up from a long sleep, I saw the dawn begin to break.

Slowly, slowly, from dusky neutral grey, to grey which was a colour, the loveliest colour, pearly, opal, breaking into gold and into fire, with long bars of purple cloud between.

And I felt once more how beautiful it was. And I delighted in the sweet quiet beauty, and felt it was of God, and thanked Him.

And then I thought of Maurice, and I felt he was not *out of the world* of God, but in the morning, in the light, out of the darkness for ever.

The beauty of the world, being of God, seemed, once more, a link with him. Then, one by one, the birds began to wake, not so much to songs, as to quiet happy domestic chirpings, as of mother birds who have nests to care for.

And my heart seemed to wake, not to songs, but to a quiet flutter of love, and a quiet little chirp of thanksgiving, I having also my nest to care for.

And I felt I should like to live for my nestlings, really like it, wish it; and that it was God's will, and would be; and that seemed to bring me nearer Maurice.

I felt it must be what he would wish, in itself, for the children's sake, and because God willed it.

I had always felt, in that terrible benumbed way, he could not be wishing me to die and leave them, any more than he had wished to leave us himself; and this had caused a dim feeling of disunion and separation of desire even from him.

I had honestly willed what I thought God willed. But now that I was too weak for an effort of will, it seemed as if God sent a thrill of natural wish into the will, and I became *content* to live.

Then as I lay quite still and content, a little stir in the shaded corner of the room drew my eyes to it, and there I saw my Margaret, her upturned face, pale and worn, leaning on her clasped hands, hands clasped, I felt, in prayer.

I called her to me.

She came and knelt beside the bed, and hid her face, and I stroked the pretty wavy golden

hair and said, "Darling, I am better. And I am glad."

One long sob quivered through her whole frame, quickly repressed.

I knew what it meant.

They had thought, as I had, that I never could be glad again. I had ten thousand things to say, but I could not say one more then.

For in truth I was and am glad, glad in my inmost heart to live, to live and love.

All day some quaint words of an old German hymn have been humming through my heart, as the bees among the flowers outside—

"Erst heisst der Freund die Seele ruhn
Dann essen, und hernach was thun."

Yes; *rest first*. In all conflicts, rest first; rest of the whole being in God. Then food, bread of life, from Him; then the work and the battle with Him and for Him.

Half our failures come, I think, from reversing this order. We seek to create the bread, to sustain ourselves with thoughts; instead of receiving it all

from Him. And then on this unsubstantial food, we try to gird ourselves for the conflict, until, faint and panting, we fall once more into the unutterable peace of His sustaining arms; the bread of God is once more given us, and once more we live; and once more, again, we can work and battle. And thoughts ennobling, quickening, spring up in our hearts; not dry, laboriously raked up from the chaff of our own threshing-floor, but living, human, divine, springing up from the hand of the Sower, the Son of Man.

Dear, fair, wide world, not mine, nor any one's; certainly not the devil's—but God's.

Beautiful visible world, the shell of it, the fragment of it visible to us;—surely not less visible to them whose eyes are no more “holden” for ever, but open to see Thee, and therefore to see all things in the light of Thy Face.

Stately pure lilies, summer roses, little brook with its prattlings, and its silvery flashings, and its deep quiet pools, and the green leaves mirrored in them, and the birds drinking of them and chirping as they

fly away; and sweet tender dawns, and endlessly-varying glories of sunsets, no two alike—these are not in *my* world only, they are in the world of the Son of God, for Whose pleasure they are, and were created; and therefore in the world of those who are with Him, and yielding them delight.

Our “other” visible “world” is revealed again: heaven, the universe of suns, the central fire-worlds,—with what unseen host of fair planetary earth-worlds circling round them to be lived and loved in, no one knows.

I used sometimes to feel, at first, it would be a kind of comfort if I knew he was living in some one definite place, though in the remotest star of them all. The separation into the unseen, seemed so much farther than that of any possible distance.

But God, who made and inspires and rejoices in them all, is a Spirit. And I who wonder and rejoice in them am a spirit. I it is, my unseen ghost, not my eyes and ears, but *I* through these, who so delight and adore.

They are not out of the visible world, though we

know not through what medium they perceive it. They have penetrated deeper into the heart of its beauty, and glory, and meaning.

We and our world are not invisible to them because they are invisible to us. The blindness and deafness is ours, not theirs. And so, I think not seldom, is even the dumbness.

This evening for the first time I touched the piano again; ventured on some of the old music he used to love to listen to.

Mysterious world of music! That used to be more terrible to me than all. It had been so peculiarly a world in which we two seemed to walk alone together. And when he could no longer listen, it was as if every alternate note of the instrument had become dumb. There was no meaning, use, good, delight, harmony in anything.

But now this world also seems open to me again. Music is chosen as the largest, deepest expression of heaven. Song; that is, music and poetry. This is the speech of the world where he is.

Music is no accidental extra decoration of this

world. It is essential, inevitable, mathematically inevitable, part of the universal necessity of beauty in all divine work. We, in our music, are only extricating the essential harmonies hidden in all things; art as divine as can be given to man.

God made the birds sing; God, who is a Spirit, interwove all things with these musical vibrations; Christ, the Incarnate Lord, Himself sang the ancient Passover hymn of His nation the night before He suffered; and shall those who are with Him, singing the new song, the Passover hymn of the whole race, be deaf to the music "here below," which, being by divine necessity in the nature of things, cannot be *false*, however *feeble*?

Not in individual Christian life only, not in a host of separate perfected spirits only, does Christ our Lord live, but in One Body in heaven and earth, far less divided by death, by the barrier between the seen and unseen, than by the barriers of sect and sin, among the visible and militant below.

Who made the distinction between the Church militant and triumphant?

The Apocalypse reveals *armies* of heaven.

Who made the distinction between those who rest and those who serve?

The Apocalypse makes a different distinction. Above, "*they serve Him day and night.*"

"Who all night long unwearied sing;" unwearied serve. And of what that serving Him means we need no fresh interpretation from heaven. Not backward, at all events, and downward from St. Paul's work to Adam and Eve's work, from the glorious wilderness and battlefield work to the infantine Paradise work, from serving human creatures to taking care of flowers, from rescuing souls to pruning spiritualised vines!

We must not read the divine printing backward, making symbols into pictures.

Our May's old merry laugh in the garden, with Dot's quiet bark of response, and Margaret's soft little purling laugh mingled with it.

How sweet the sounds are!

Margaret is telling May one of Andersen's fairy tales. Laughter! how wide its range is, from hell

to the borders of heaven, from mockery and frantic revelries to sweet innocent childlike laughter! There is nothing in May's laugh to jar on the hymns of angels, any more than on the songs of the larks and robins, or than there is anything in the songs of birds to jar on the songs of angels.

Love, innocent happy laughter, life, happiness—these are not the things which are out of harmony with heaven.

The only thing at real discord with heaven is *death*; death in all spheres; the *state* of death; sorrow which is death and worketh death; sin which is death and worketh death.

Childhood, all true festivals, all real joy, love, holy marriage, birth of all new delights, these, O our beloved, who live for evermore, these are the images and foretastes which lift us towards your life; and sickness, sorrow, suffering only do this by cleansing the heart of all the shallowness and hollowness which hinder its ringing true to the true love, and drinking deep of the eternal joy.

May and Margaret have just made up a number

of Easter eggs, and dressed dolls, and battledores, and shuttlecocks, and shells, and sea-weed pictures, for our old friend of the toy-shop in the alley. May has saved her weekly pence for this, and has enlisted some of Margaret's school-children's elder brothers in the construction of the battledores.

All our life spent in getting ingrained into the stuff of our hearts the truth that "*it is more blessed to give than to receive,*" more divine to "*minister than to be ministered unto,*" we are not surely to find our heaven in *unlearning* this! Being a little lower than the angels, we are not to be made so much lower than they are, as that would be.

Easter:—the second Easter with Maurice beyond death; the first in which the shadow seems behind me also, and we both are walking, again, as "heirs together of the grace of life;" the *charisma* of life, how magnificent and beautiful and full the words are! I have an especial pleasure in the old Greek word; it rises above all the dust of our controversies and vulgarisms, and soars to us laden with sweetnesses from a thousand gardens, old and new, graces,

gracefulness, graciousness, festive beauty, and generous giving.

Heirs! not, then, only a gift, an inheritance; the delicious surprise of a new-born delight blended with the sacred endearment of a familiar inheritance; ours because children of the Father, as well as because forgiven and made free.

And *together*; yes, for ever together, as he said, "We will, we do drink every cup together."

And the gift is life.

Ah! he knows now what life means. I am only beginning to learn.

The Lord is risen indeed; risen, and therefore not here; risen, therefore with us always; all the days.

It is one Church, above and below; one universe, one life, one kingdom. But until lately it seems strange to think how little I really understood that the *majority*, in all senses, are there, the incomparable majority of human beings, of our existence, of our interests, of our ministries; that quite literally this is only the threshold and the school.

I had thought I might have been at the Easter Communion this year in church.

But it was pronounced imprudent.

Therefore the old rector most thoughtfully arranged for us to receive before the morning service, in my "upper chamber."

We were quite a family gathering—Austin, Eustace, Margaret, Monica, Winifred.

"Jesu dulcis memoria,
 Dans vera cordi gaudia;
 Sed super mel et omnia
 Ejus dulcis præsentia."

Sweeter to me (whether from early familiarity, or from something Teutonic in my nature) is the German translation:—

"Jesu, deiner zu gedenken
 Kann dem Herzen Freude schenken;
 Aber mit was Himmelstränken
 Labt uns deine Gegenwart.

Tröstlich wenn man reuig stehet;
 Herzlich wenn man vor ihm flehet;
 Lieblich wenn man zu ihm gehet;
 Unaussprechlich wenn er da."

How can we thank Him enough for making our crowning act of worship a divine act of communion; thus giving Himself to us, as once, and for ever, for

us; gathering us not around history, or dogma, or thought about Him, but around and to Himself, and in Him to all in and with Him!

Everything is resumed in this Blessed Eucharist. His sacrifice for us, His union with us, our sacrifice of our whole selves in union with Him to God. From Calvary to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the life-blood of the unutterable agony, the wine of the unutterable joy, all are resumed here. *How* life is communicated here, as in nature, is the Divine secret. The fact is ours. Can we believe more than His most real presence? Can we ask more than a Roman Catholic priest I know of was wont to ask in celebrating, "Give us all *Thou intendest to give* in this Blessed Sacrament?"

The children surround me with little festive ceremonials, greeting every step back into life as a new festival day. How terrible this would be to me, if I were not really glad to live longer here. But I am content, "content to do Thy will;" content that this is His will.

Last week it was my first drive. Lady Katharine

took me in her pony-carriage, and scolded me for my follies as affectionately as she could any of her own children.

She took me to a height from which we saw the sea; that visible suggestion of the other world beyond, unseen; the Atlantic with the grand sweep of its emerald and amethyst waves, and the leaping up of the snowy foam hundreds of feet against the dark rocks. We rested for a moment just to hear that roar, as of a great multitude, which speaks the deadly power underlying this crystalline glory. And the delicious salt sea smell came up to us, and brought me a feeling of consciously-returning health.

Lady Katharine was eloquent about curates.

She says Victor Felix-Hunter (he drops the Felix) has no necessity to occupy himself with our school; that a scheme worth trying, whether practicable or not, for the employment of young gentlewomen, is at stake in Margaret's experiment; and that she has been urging on the rector, who is much away, the importance of having an older man in priest's orders.

I did come home a little tired. The sea and

Lady Katharine together are a very bracing atmosphere. But I had a long sleep; so probably both were good for me.

I don't really see that Victor Hunter comes here so very much; and when he does, he almost always talks to me.

Eustace and he are friends, and there is a kind of tender reverence in his manner to me which touches me.

I do not think, from what Monica says, he has had much to help him at home.

At first, before I was ill, I used to think his manner had a little cynicism and flippancy about it on grave subjects. But I put it down to schoolboyish shyness; and I think it has worn off.

Yesterday was my first walk.

What a glory I felt it to have my two sons to lean on, in turn! Just a foolish, happy, motherly pride.

Poor boys! How tender they have been!

How I used to watch the unshod steps on the stairs, each foot put down stealthily as a cat's, and occupying and agitating my foolish heart and quiver-

ing nerves more than if it had been the tramp of an armed heel! Then the wonderful contrivances they made for outside blinds to keep off the sun, and invalid-chairs with straps and handles to carry me down-stairs; Eustace directing like a born mechanic as he is, and Austin meekly following.

But my Austin looks sad, still. There is a steady weight on his brow which I do not like; a restlessness about his whole demeanour. We must get him off to the university as soon as possible.

With Eustace it is quite the reverse. The opposite questioning element in him seems quieted; it is not like a lull or a hush, but a kind of practical daylight calm.

My two perplexed and questioning children seem changed. Their perplexities were different. With Monica they arose from a searching intellect penetrating early into the difficulties of the world, and an eager heart pained to the core by the "riddle of this painful earth," longing for solutions, and not to be

satisfied by half solutions. With Eustace they arose from a restless will chafing against inconsistencies and incongruities, and revolting against "Philistine" common-place compromises by way of escape; rather enjoying the perplexities, especially if he could perplex other people with them, and content to spend his days in that exciting seeking after truth which has been said to be better than the finding, and may be so to any whose satisfaction is in mental exercise rather than in truth.

Eustace came to me in my room this evening, for what the children used to call "Half-hours with the Best Authors," the only one of the old family customs that survives.

"Mother," he said, "Austin and I wish to exchange professions. He would like to go in for the Competitive Civil Service, and I should like to be a clergyman. He will speak to you for himself by-and-by. It will be no difficulty to him. He always entered a good deal into my subjects. He is, you know, twice as much of a student as I am. The Oriental languages will be an entertainment to him. He will do much more credit to the family in that

capacity than I should. But that is his share of the matter. I have to speak to you of my own."

I was sitting in the bee-hive chair; he on the old-fashioned window-seat. As he spoke these last words, a shyness came over his manner, and he was silent for a few minutes, playing with the blind-tassel and turning his head from me towards the garden.

I scarcely knew whether or not he was waiting for me to speak; but the reserve which curiously seems to veil the approach of all closer confidences, and most, perhaps, in the most intimate relations, fell also over me, and I could not help him.

His face was still turned from me when he began to speak again.

"Mother," he said, "you know well that there is a quantity of doubt just now in the air; and not only that, but a quantity of very dogmatic and contemptuous denial. The amount of your belief is, by many people, considered as a kind of barometer to test your intellectual level. At a certain altitude certain luxuriant growths are left below, a little higher so many more, and so on; whilst at a really

high level all traces of the old creeds of Christendom, or, indeed, of Theism, become, in the nature of things, obsolete and impossible, and the atmosphere becomes rarefied to a point which makes breathing a labour."

"I know such doubt and denial is in the air," I said; "but the air we breathed at home was scarcely that. Any one breathing it could scarcely think Christianity was obsolete, or effete, or impossible at a high level, or in combination with modern knowledge and thought."

"Thank God," he said, "I know it. I always knew it. Mother, my faith had deeper roots than my doubts. I think I had always a dim sense that it was so. But that very thing gave me a kind of perverse security in playing with difficulties. There was always a feeling that the shore was still within reach, after all."

"I cannot quite understand it," I could not help saying. "Your father never treated any one's real doubts as if they were a revolt to be quelled by authority. He believed Christianity to be supremely rational. He did not merely bow to it with his

reason, and accept it with his will. He accepted it, was convinced of it, embraced it with his whole being. He would have entered into anything with you."

"I know," he said with a very broken voice, "I felt that, mother, when it was no longer possible to ask him."

Then he left the window-seat, and came close to me and took one of my hands in his, and looked in my face as he said—

"And then, mother, I set myself, with all my mind and heart, to make, alone, the investigation in which he might so have helped me. It was no longer a question of the double authorship of Isaiah, or the growth of myths, or of what our ancestors might have been millenniums since, but of what we may be to-morrow, and," he added in a tremulous voice, "of what my father is to-day."

"Some people might say this is just the wrong moment for such investigations, when the death-mists are about us, and the tender longing to penetrate the impenetrable is on us, out of which they say half the religions of the world have grown. I

don't believe it. I think what we want most is anything that will wake us up thoroughly, and compel us to fix our minds steadfastly and continuously on the subject; to ask ourselves honestly what we believe and what we do not. An indolent vagueness seems to me just the soil in which doubts flourish as luxuriantly as credulities; if, indeed, half the doubts are not *credulities reversed*, just as half the credulities are *scepticism reversed*, by the will. Don't you think there are *credulities of other people's doubts*, as well as credulities of other people's superstitions?"

"I think," I said, "and I believe your father thought, that not a few of the young men who glorify the nineteenth century and modern thought, and have too much 'culture' to receive the Old Testament, are as little burdened with physical science or Oriental criticism or modern or ancient thought, as some of the young ladies who despise the nineteenth century, and are devoted to 'Catholic doctrine,' are with knowledge of councils or fathers."

"Mother," he said, "is it not like father's story of the housemaid, who told him, when he gently

remonstrated with her for not coming to church, that 'she had nothing to say against his doctrine,' but that the Plymouth Brother to whom she had deserted 'gives us the Greek?'"

How thankful I am that I never suffered his name to be banished, even when it was a terrible pang to hear it mentioned, so that now his playful sayings and familiar stories will never cease to be our children's household words! God forbid that things connected with his memory should be shut up unused, like the chambers of the departed, in some palaces I have seen,—so that the very dwelling-place becomes a tomb, a place of dead memories, instead of blending its life with the life that goes on. How much we lose if the tender recollections which bring the tears and smiles together are banished into vacuums of silence!

We had wandered from Eustace's own story.

"How did you set out on this solitary quest?" I said.

"In the first place," he said, "I did not attempt to delude myself into the persuasion that any one brought up as I have been can begin with a *tabula*

rasa. I don't believe any one in England, or in Christendom, in this century, can do it, any one brought up either within the fold or under the remotest shadow of any Christian Church. Christian life is at least one fact as undeniable as physical life. Christendom has a literature, has institutions. Christianity has fervent believers whose whole existence is moulded by it; you may detest or revere the results, but you cannot ignore them, or regard the religion as obsolete, by any other process than by shutting your eyes, which is, of course, not a negative and unconscious, but a most conscious and positive process.

"The photographs are there, and you cannot efface them by any other method than by printing another over them.

"So I thought it useless to try to place myself in the position of one of St. Paul's Athenian audience. When the words which 'that babbler said' have remoulded the whole civilisation and life against which they seemed so powerless, when they have been the sacred treasure of thousands of generations, moreover when they have been engraven on

our hearts from infancy, through lips and lives, such as both of yours, it is the wildest delusion to think we can approach them through a calm, candid indifference, and try the experiment in a vacuum. I did not try, so that I suppose a candid sceptic might pronounce my conclusions were foregone, and my investigations worthless.

"But, nevertheless, above all things, mother, I did, and I do, desire to believe what is *true*. The *truth exists*, whether we believe it or not; and it is so entirely useless to build on anything else; so certain, if we do not fall on it and be broken as to our prejudices, it will fall on us and all we do, and grind us to powder.

"I tried to be candid, then, by honestly seeing what had to be said, and was said, on both sides.

"I *prayed*, to begin with; which some might say was begging the whole question. Then I entered on a real, earnest, painstaking study of the Bible itself, as of any other literature; poems, history, treatises, with all the illustrative explanatory criticism I could find.

“And I read the books which are supposed to contain the most destructive criticism, not the small books by small people *about* the attacks, which take it for granted their work is done, Christianity abolished, and the Christian Church already crumbled away to the lowest levels; but the great books which *make* the attacks, whether by undermining or by open assault. And,” he concluded, his whole countenance beaming, and his voice with a manly firmness in it which seemed new to me, “I came to the conclusion that I could spend my whole life in no nobler or better way than in endeavouring to bring home to the hearts of men and women and children the Christian religion, the life and death and resurrection, and teaching of our Lord; all that is meant by the revelation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; that it is life and light and healing for heart and mind and conscience. And I came to the practical conclusion, mother, that nowhere could I do this work with more freedom or thoroughness than as a clergyman of the Church of England; than by treading, as closely as I may, in my father’s footsteps.”

Deeply as his words struck my heart, it was not to tears, but to an inspiring joy, and I said—

“He would not have wished you to tread in any footsteps but those of the Master; all other examples he would have thought cramping, His only liberating and true for all.”

“I know,” he said. “That is what I mean by treading in my father’s footsteps.”

After this conversation with Eustace, I wait anxiously for the moment when Austin will give me his confidence. Yet I dare do nothing to hasten or enforce it. I have the strongest feeling that confidence is as little within the control of the giver as of the receiver, and this even most in the closest relations. Most of all, perhaps, in the relations between a parent and child. It seems to me that the want of recognition of this fact leads to countless painful jars.

The relationship between parent and child, from the very sacredness of the reverence due to the relation from the child, demands an equal reverence on the part of the parent for the personality which

is of God's creation, and is even deeper than all human relationships.

We were always anxious so to recognise the divine image in our children, that, as Jeremy Taylor says, "out of the instinctive endearments, the religion and gratitude and interest of our relationship, if possible, in the nature of things, true friendship may spring."

Jeremy Taylor's "Discourse on Friendship" was especially dear to us, and I think, if taken to heart, its wise words might prevent many a craving for the impossible, and hinder many a misunderstanding which grates on hearts which are, nevertheless, truly bound together, and wastes in petty irritations lives which might enrich each other.

Perhaps the disappointment I now feel in Austin's reserve reveals to me that I had not been altogether free from too absorbing expectations from my children.

"Friendship," Jeremy Taylor writes, "is the greatest bond in the world; and there is no society and there is no relation that is worthy, but it is

made so by the communications of friendship, and by partaking some of its excellences.

“For friendship is a transcendent, and signifies as much as unity can mean; and every consent, and every pleasure, and every benefit, and every society is the mother or daughter of friendship.

“Some friendships are made by nature, some by contract, some by interest, and some by souls.

“Nature can make no friendships greater than her own excellences.

“In this scene (of nature), that of parents and children is greatest, which indeed is begun in nature, but is actuated by society and mutual endearments. The friendship of children to their parents is not properly friendship, but gratitude and interest, and religion; and whatever can supervene of the nature of friendship comes in upon another account; upon society and worthiness of choice.

“This relation on either hand makes great dear-nesses; but it hath special and proper significations of it, and there is a special duty incumbent on each other respectively. This friendship and social relation is not equal, and there is too much authority

on one side and too much fear on the other to make equal friendships. ('Fear,' we should scarcely say, except the tender fear which brings conscience in, and hinders freedom!) And therefore, although this is one of the kinds of friendship, yet friendship does do some things which (the relations of) father and son do not; they are such a duty as no other friendship can annul, and having first possession must abide for ever. But then this also is true, that the social relations of parents and children not having in them all the capacities of a proper friendship, cannot challenge all the sympathies of it; that is, it is no prejudice to the duty I owe them to pay all the dearnesses which are due here."

Ah, between us and our children there has been so much of "those free and open communicating counsels, and that evenness and pleasantness of conversation," which he seems to think impossible to the relation! The twilight, as he calls it, of natural relationship has so much dawned into the day of friendship,—the blossom to the fairest fruit of Paradise,—that I must be careful not to be exacting.

Especially now that marriage, which he calls "the queen of friendships," is gone from our home; a marriage which was indeed what he says of friendship, "a marriage of souls," or in the words which in this quaint old folio we have so often read together, "the greatest love and the greatest usefulness, and the most open communication, and the noblest suffering, and the most exemplary faithfulness, and the severest truth, and the heartiest counsel, and the greatest union of minds, of which brave men and women are capable."

Ah, I must not expect that again in any one on earth, or even demand it of my children, much of it as flows between us abundantly and spontaneously now.

But it does pierce my heart to see Austin's heart evidently so heavy, and yet so closed to me; and to know that he has a secret burden, and to feel it on my heart, and yet not dare lift a finger to help him with it.

Except in prayer. Except in seeking to lay that strong Divine hand beneath him and his burdens. And that is never in vain.

Ah, people speak sometimes as if it were a kind of *extra* in affection to leave the ninety-and-nine for the lost one.

It is simply the *necessity* of all affection, inevitable, essential to it, from the care of a shepherd for his sheep to the love of a parent for the child.

Whatever we may do for the rest of the flock, we *cannot* for an hour dismiss the sick, the suffering, the prodigal from our hearts.

What breadth, and depth, and eternity of promise must then abide in this constraining necessity to love, with Him who is Love, is the Father!

CHAPTER VII.

THE ice is broken. And deep as the gulf is which it has opened, I am thankful.

It was not to me Austin spoke first. It was to Winifred. How much she has been to us, all our lives! how much more than ever, she is now! When I think how eager and ardent her nature is, and how readily, how continually, and yet how unconsciously, she has through all her life thrown all the fervour of her heart into loving where she could never be loved best, I feel inclined to waver towards the conviction that the single life, if less fully developed in humanity, is the angelic life, and will take its place more naturally among that of the heavenly ministrants.

And yet, after all, it seems ungenerous to talk of being first or second, of best and second-best, in affection.

Each character, and relation, and affection is so

different that "not lesser," but "diverse" is all we need think.

In this instance, as in so many instances before, there was just a touch of freedom, and a lessening of the fear of grieving, in the relation between Austin and Winifred, which made it possible for him to let her see what he would have suffered anything rather than reveal unnecessarily to me.

And then with the loyalty, never failing with Winifred, she gently encouraged him to speak to me.

He chose an apparently casual moment to do this, when Eustace was getting the donkey-chair ready to take me to the sea-shore, and I was sitting with my bonnet on in the garden waiting.

"Mother," he said, in a quiet, indifferent tone, "Eustace has told you that we wish to change professions. I know you both always felt the calling of the laity might be as divine as that of the clergy, and the usefulness in some ways as great."

"Certainly, we always thought so," I said. "Whatever is the real vocation is the highest thing possible for any of us."

He evaded that question.

"It does matter to England, not a little, doesn't it, what the character of her civilians in India is? And I think I should comprehend some of the difficulties between Europeans and natives, and try to be just. And philology is a real interest to me, which it is not to Eustace. I might perhaps bring in some slight contributions in that way."

He spoke rapidly.

"You will not object to the change, mother," he added. "Eustace would be so much better in all practical matters for you and the girls, than I could be. Not that I mean," he concluded, checking himself, "that any grand motive of self-sacrifice has influenced me. I would not have you think I pretended to that."

"I never could think you pretended to anything," I said.

"Ah, mother," he replied, with uncontrollable emotion, "I have done nothing else."

At that moment the wheels were heard, and Eustace drove round to the little gate.

"Austin will drive me to-day," I said.

Eustace yielded his place, and we set off together.

We did not pursue the subject during the drive. Donkeys, under the most favourable circumstances of education, can scarcely be driven without absorbing attention. But when we reached the sands, and Austin had established the donkey with a bundle of hay, and me on the rocks with my shawls and cushions, he came and sate down on a rock beside me, and said, "Aunt Winifred says you had rather hear the whole truth, and that you would help me. I am not at all sure she is right, that I have any right to let my weakness add to your burdens, or that you can help me. If any one could, *you* could. But I don't believe any one can."

"Perhaps not," I said. "Most of the real battles are single combats."

"I suppose so," he said, "but I must not deceive you. If I tell you anything, I must tell you all. With me it is no battle. I see nothing real enough to battle with or about. It all seems to me a fantastic dream, and I myself the most shadowy part of it."

"That belongs to the land of the terrible shadow, where we have been," I said.

He looked for the first time for a moment straight into my eyes.

"Did you never read the 'Passing of Arthur?'" I said.

"Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west.
A death-white mist slept over sand and sea,
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew
Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold
With formless fear; and even on Arthur fell
Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought,
For friend and foe were shadows in the mist."

And ever and anon

'Shrieks

After the Christ, of those who falling down
Looked up for heaven, and only saw the mist.'

And Arthur's own words—

'On my heart hath fall'n
Confusion, till I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be king.'"

"Even on Arthur!" he slowly repeated. "Mother, what can have made *you* turn to those words? For *me* they seem made!"

"They kept dimly and fragmentarily sighing through my heart for weeks," I said.

"Even on Arthur fell confusion," he repeated, as if to himself,

" 'Since he saw not whom he fought,
For friend and foe were shadows in the mist.' "

"Looked up for heaven, and only saw the mist!'"

"Ah, mother!" he resumed. "You can never have known that!"

"I should think no one can have ever really looked up for heaven, and above all into heaven *to look for any one there*, and *not* known it," I said.

He changed his place, and seated himself on a stone at my feet.

"I thought no one who had ever known what real faith was," he said, "could ever have felt that."

"Is not faith primarily trust?" I said. "And does not very much depend on what *we have to entrust*, as well as on whom we trust it with? You could trust your wealth, and we could trust ourselves, Austin, or we think we could, to the waves, but when the vessel has to be entrusted out of our sight with what is *more than life* to us, the old as-

surances fail; we want another kind of assurance. Every deepening of life creates a chasm which needs a deepening of faith to fill it."

He was silent for a few minutes, then he said, "I thought it was half my own wretched unreality, and half, perhaps, the unreality of the beliefs I had multiplied with such easy exuberance around me. I seem to have accepted whatever traditional belief I thought beautiful as easily as fairy tales, and with as little real conviction."

"I think, whatever the substance of our faith is," I said, "it comes to be tested in this way one time or another; whether it is a forest of beautiful traditions, or a fortress of rigid doctrine."

"But mother," he said, "I do not think you can imagine, and I can scarcely bear to put into any kind of words how little in me has stood the terrible test. Not the Church, not even Christianity only; of God, the soul, immortality, of all spiritual existence, it seems out of my power to have the slightest hold."

"I always have felt," I replied, "that scepticism

would take that shape, if any, with me. If anything spiritual at all is real, Christ is real, and Christian life; if not that, nothing."

I spoke very quietly; and something in the calmness of my tone, I think, reassured him; for looking up with intense earnestness in my face, he said,—

"Mother, you are not in those terrible mists now?"

"No," I said, "if I exist, I am sure God exists, and the Lord who lived and died and dieth nevermore, and those who have loved Him, living with Him."

"Then you can pray!" he said.

He took my hand and said no more.

To be able to pray, and to be sure to pray for him, meant, he knew so well, the same thing.

He sat some time silent in that very place where I had sate with my father so many years ago, on the afternoon of the Sunday of my first Communion.

My father's words came back to me, "I tremble

sometimes at the weary way that may lie before you. There are many battles to be fought;" and I remember how all the world seemed to lie before me, then, as a great battle-plain on the shores of a great sea; or as the sea on which we are going home through a thousand perils, and all life as an Iliad and an Odyssey, yet I feared nothing.

And now I sate there trembling for my children, as he had trembled for me.

Has what I have proved of the perils and of the sustaining grace, then, deepened my terror and lessened my trust?

No! the alarms are deepened, the dangers seem greater, known, than they were unknown. The ways by which people reach the Home seem more diverse; the weapons with which the battles are fought are more imperfect than I knew, but my trust is also deepened in the Leader.

A little more of His patience, of the tarrying His leisure, has, I think, come to me, a little more sense of the greatness and wisdom of those slow ways by which He engraves the eternal lessons home.

"Les choses ne vont pas si vite," we have to say again and again, as we watch the slow unfolding of His purposes, so slow, and often with such ebbs of retrogression, as they seem to us, watching the tide; only every third wave making progress, at best,—and less, at those moments of crisis when the tide is turning.

So I thought, as we sat on that rocky point together. On one side a little pool, with its anchored crimson corallines and anemones swaying about and making currents in its still depths, and the little silvery fish darting in and out in its little world. On the other the ocean, the great "world-sea," its amethyst and emerald waves heaving in their great ocean-sweeps in long perspective to the line of light which met the golden sky; heaving on, day after day, beyond that, to the new world on the other side.

Heaving with ceaseless restlessness as far as eye could see; but as they neared the sands another character came on them. No more tossing in aimless unrest, a fierce purpose seized them, and they

rushed on like war-horses, reined in by a mighty hand, and retreating with a moan of revolt, but always coming up again to the attack, until at last the moment came when it was clear the hand that had restrained was pressing them on. The word of command "Forward" had been given. Not slowly now, perceptibly, foot after foot of the sand was gained, until one bold wave dashed over the rocks into the still pool beside us. And in a few minutes more the quiet pool had become a portion of the great onward-sweeping sea.

But the tide turned in the heart of my son beside me? He said nothing to indicate it, as he gathered up the shawls and led me back to the donkey-chair.

But something in my heart says the tide has turned.

It may not sweep precisely in the direction, nor reach just the height I would choose.

I must be reverent to the Divine Presence working in our children's hearts.

Party currents may be turned hither and thither at our will.

But the tide of human love and divine faith is ruled by heavenly influences altogether beyond these.

CHAPTER VIII.

Monica's Note-book.

How many things of which I thought we knew the meaning, I have found during these last months, were mere empty shells to me!

So sheltered, after all, our home has been. There were wide ranges of view from its windows into life in all directions. But the widest view from a window is very different from a walk among the places themselves.

For one thing, I had no idea what luxury meant, or riches, or, perhaps, "the world."

To have beautiful things valued because they cost a great deal, because they are rare, because they are only comprehensible by an exclusive clique, in other words, because they are ours exclusively,—valued by the fact of their being *unattainable* by other people, is so entirely new to me.

We always valued things by the extent to which they could be *shared* by other people.

Again, with all our own and the boys' perversities, we honestly and naturally revered father and mother's judgment and taste, and beliefs, and thought what they cared for, probably the things best worth caring for.

But poor Mrs. Felix-Hunter, with the most single-hearted desire to be and do and like what her children think the right thing, is always consciously and painfully falling short of their standard, and being protested against, on one side or another.

Mr. Felix-Hunter makes no attempt at being a standard of taste. He submits to have his house decorated, and his acquaintances chosen, reserving the right to one uninvaded room, and to occasional dinner-parties of his own selection; and he supplies the funds with a mixture of grumbling at the amount demanded, and of satisfaction at finding it so easy to supply.

Curiously, he interests me rather more than any of them; partly, perhaps, because he is invariably

kind, and thoughtful for me, whilst the rest evidently think me an alien, and something of an intruder.

I wonder why he is so kind to me. There is a kind of reverent tenderness in his voice and look sometimes, which touches me. Perhaps it is because of my mourning, and our sorrow.

The other reason I am interested in him, is, I believe, his reality.

About the rest there is so much that strikes me as *dilettante*, by which I mean, *not* "delighting in"—*not* loving, even beautiful things for their own sake, but from some subordinate attraction of fashion, because other people say we ought to like them.

Mr. Felix-Hunter unfeignedly loves and delights in his own pursuit, which is, of course, making money.

I do not mean anything sarcastic in that. I really can quite understand that making money on a large scale may become a very interesting pursuit.

It means power, honour, space, beautiful things, absence of care; above all, *power*, the sense that you possess a hidden resource, which, whenever you

choose to draw on it, can work wonders; an Aladdin's lamp, a Fortunatus's purse, seven-leagued boots, a flying carpet.

Of course most people die without working the wonders, without building the Aladdin's palaces, or making the voyages through the air, or pouring forth the showers of gold.

But then the delight is in the *power*, the hidden conscious power; hidden, yet acknowledged by all, which will make people who have scarcely the remotest chance of getting a drop of your golden shower, or a diamond of your countless treasure, follow you with a curious homage, as the possessor, and even pursue the worship beyond the tomb by sending carriages in troops to your funeral.

I think the worship of money, the lowest I suppose, in one sense, we are liable to, in another, bears the strongest witness to the lofty ideal faculties of our nature, our appreciation of the future beyond the present, the unseen beyond the seen, the possible beyond the actual.

There is to me a strange romance in those announcements from the money-market which Mr,

Felix-Hunter sometimes reads aloud in an unctuous voice at breakfast; some railway across Russian steppes "down," some gigantic bridge across a Transatlantic river "up," Russia, the United States, France, Egypt, Turkey, empires older than Christianity, republics with the future of the world in their arms, all calculated and measured as forces and elements in the current of fortune which is bearing him steadily towards the millionaires.

It is all quite real, and therefore, in a sense, ideal, and it interests me.

And I suppose that pleases Mr. Felix-Hunter, whose own children are too refined and exalted for any such interest in the sources of the tide which is floating them on in luxury towards the highest places.

This is a new world to me; a curious imitative world.

The very names of the family are records of various phases of "restoration."

Ethel the eldest daughter, and Bertrand the

eldest son, were named in the days when mediævalism and the modern Gothic were prevalent.

Ethel has remained in some measure true to her nomenclature. Her room is rich in Gothic brackets and shrines, oaken and gilded, with a draped curtain like an altar in the corner, and numbers of angels and saints with meek, unconscious expressions and a spiritual indifference to anatomy, and among them some copies of the real early sacred paintings, in which such quaint loveliness was the natural utterance of artists striving heart and soul after their highest, not the imitative attempt of copyists aiming at the highest by an angular bend backwards through the true aspirations of former ages.

Curiously blended with these are some later Roman developments, the newest statue of the Immaculate Mother after the latest Vatican model, and in one retired corner a picture of the Sacred Heart, after the visions of the Blessed Marie Alacocq.

So strange and dream-like it all seems to me. Because, Rome, if you think her authority divine, is, of course, quite accessible; and Ethel seems to have

as little real sense of any duty of submitting personally to the authority on which all these developments are received, as if Pius IX. were a contemporary of Gregory VII.

Tremendously serious the claims of that authority seem to me, and I can quite conceive troubled consciences acknowledging it as the only perceptible refuge from Chaos, and therewith accepting the consequences. But to take the consequences, the most difficult doctrines, as a matter of taste or preference, without recognising the source, does seem to me the strangest, most eccentric complication of fashion and taste with faith.

Indeed the whole family life seems to me, sometimes, a curious kind of perpetual charade, or masqued ball—in which various people represent various centuries, and none represent themselves.

Nevertheless, Ethel and I not unfrequently find ourselves on the same side in the frequent discussions in which this family abounds, the general tide having swept quite away from Christendom and self-denial, to the Pagan ages of beauty, and enjoyment, and self-culture.

Bertrand, the eldest son, whom I have not yet seen, seems to be the leader of this reaction.

And this, again, is so curiously reflective and dream-like.

It is not Homer and Æschylus and the grave old Greeks, with whom beauty was a necessity just as it is in God's creation, and to whom this earth, it seems to me, was a very painful riddle, and life, with all its infinite value above the shadows of death, a joy rooted in sorrow, a day born of night, and dying with it. It is Paganism through a haze of Christianity; its unfathomable gulfs softened by mists of the dawn which cannot be lost, and rendered endurable by a vague conviction, that, after all, you cannot be drowned in them; the agony of its unanswerable questions softened from despair into a mild melancholy, by the echo of the imperishable answer that has been given.

It seems to me all a dim, artificial, theatrical light, like the subdued half-tints in which the house is decorated; or a light like that first circle of Dante's *Inferno*, where the shades of Virgil and the great pagan men and women renewed in the shadowy

light which never dawned nor set, a dreamy echo of the converse of earth, which could lead to no action, and no conclusion; on one side Ethel's mild reflection of the mediæval faith without its terrors and its renunciations, its submissions of will and mortifications of affection, its Dies Iræ and its Crusades; on the other side, this shadowy resuscitation of Paganism, without its lofty aspirations, its eager questionings, its mournful acquiescences in fate, its stern resignation to unanswerable mysteries.

I cannot say they are very gracious to me.

I will not complain, even to myself. I am not going to set up as a "femme incomprise."

Naturally I am a little lonely; I should be lonely anywhere, now; so many questions accumulate, and yet I feel I must not let them accumulate, now that the dear *Causeries du Lundi* are over for ever, and there can be no periodical unburdenings.

I must unload every night as far as I can, "cast my burden" on Him who does not remove the burdens, but who does sustain those laden with them.

I am not accustomed to live in an atmosphere of suspicion.

Ethel said to me this morning as she met me dressed to go to early communion, "I did not know you cared for early Celebrations."

She said no more. But there was a curious touch of scorn in her tone, as if she thought I were an unprivileged creature intruding on some of her sacred ground.

And this afternoon, Antonia, the youngest of my two especial pupils (Antonia and Helena) brought me a Sunday paper, and said, with considerable *malice* (in the French sense, if not in the English), "I am afraid it has not the money article, Miss Leigh, which so interests you and papa. But perhaps it may do until that can be had."

It flashed on me that they actually think me untrue; a complaisant creature anxious to adapt her opinions to every one!

And the idea was so entirely new to me, that I had no defence ready.

It was curious, perhaps. But I did not feel indignant, as Margaret would on my account, or

amused as the Long Parliament might at seeing me suspected of a defect of militant tendency. I began to wonder what it could be in me that could have given them such an impression. I suppose it is that I do naturally always try to get at what people mean at the bottom of their various tastes and beliefs, at the kernel of truth that it seems to me there must be in all things that interest human beings, and then to set aside the separating husks and crusts, and meet them in that common nucleus.

And when the crusts are very nearly the whole (as I fear they are here), I suppose people don't understand it, and think you are "trimming," or trifling with them and their crusts.

I don't think this strange suspiciousness can last, because I really am true. I think there is no doubt I am, and I think they must find it out one day, sooner or later. I hope it may be soon, because I don't see how I am to help them whilst they distrust me.

Antonia is the one who interests me most. There is an earnest, searching look in her eyes sometimes when I catch them fixed on me, as if, poor child,

she had a dim sense that the world around her is hollow paste-board, and were now and then wondering for a moment if a solid living creature had got into the middle of it in the shape of me.

Helena is soft and fair, and tall and fully developed, with golden hair in soft waves, a languid unawake expression on her drooping eyelids, and her full lips, and a slow grace in her movements.

Antonia is a little vivacious creature, with eyes bright, wistful and searching like a dog's, and hair dark and energetically curly, as if every hair had an individual existence.

As yet she has not adopted any century, unless it is a vigorous development of the nineteenth, among the more advanced novels of which has lain her chief literary pasture.

To-day I endeavoured to begin a course of history. I had been intending to begin with English history, because I think the first thing in history is to make the Past a continuity from the Present, to make ourselves feel we are not looking at a fairy-tale, or a picture in the clouds, but making the ac-

quaintance of men and women who have lived, and live still.

And to this end I think it must be better to go back from our own times, and to go out from our own country, than to begin from the remotest end of time and space.

If Westminster Abbey and the Tower of London, or the High Street of Southwark, from which the Canterbury pilgrims started, are scenes of a great real drama to us, then the Parthenon and the Coliseum may become so also, and Leonidas as real as the Duke of Wellington. But if we begin with Greece and Rome, I am afraid of all becoming shadowy to us, and the Duke of Wellington being as much a dream as Leonidas.

I proposed that we should begin with Henry VIII., Mary Tudor, and Queen Elizabeth, the period of our history lately so largely unfolded. And I ventured to suggest that before beginning we should make an expedition to the Tower of London, which was the scene of so many of the events of that history.

My suggestion was not received in an encouraging way.

Helena languidly observed that she had been all over the Tower of London when she was six years old; and Antonia protested that there was more truth in one of the vigorous and original novels she was reading than in all history put together. "Of course," she concluded, "if you are to give us lessons in history, we will do them, as in music or drawing or German. But you need not try to sugar them for us. I don't mind medicine, and I hate sweets."

I did feel irritated. What was I to do with these children who had got to the end of interest in everything before they understood anything? who looked on history as a lesson just to be got over, and for the most part as a lie, and on the great places consecrated by brave lives and death, as mere "sights" for little children? The rudeness to me did not disturb me. It was the hopelessness about them.

I began to think it would be dishonest to stay

and be paid, under the pretext of teaching young persons who would not learn.

All these thoughts must have flashed through my mind in a moment, for Antonia's words had hardly died away, when, from behind the large Japanese screen which kept off the draught from the school-room door, issued the eldest brother, of whom I had heard so much, but whom I had never seen, and in a quiet, slightly languid voice he undertook the reply.

"Miss Bertram," he said, "you must excuse the revolt of these barbarous young persons against your enlightened endeavours to raise them in the scale of humanity. It is of no use. Helena hasn't an ounce of brains, beyond those necessary for automatic action, and Antonia has just enough for a vivacious and emotional terrier. I assure, you, as concerns them, you had better leave the Elizabethan era alone."

"Excuse me for my abrupt introduction," he added. "I was passing the door, and heard your voice; and was interested in what you said, and I could not bear that these impracticable young per-

sons should bully you. Besides, we are cousins, which ought to be an introduction."

It was the first time our relationship had been alluded to in the family, and the first time any one had spoken a word in my defence in that house.

I looked up in his face, and shook the hand he held out cordially enough.

It was a relief.

But the expression on his face as I looked up was, I think, more than half satirical.

I imagine he thinks all women would be better with little more brains than are necessary to make classical outlines calmly expressive up to the point of sculpture. And no doubt he considers me as absurd, and perhaps as excusable, with my Elizabethan era, as Antonia with her novels.

As he was leaving, however, he happened to glance at a half-finished sketch of mine in St. James's Park.

He paused a little while before it, and then said, "I should like to show that to Gregson."

The look that passed between the two girls at this announcement amused me.

Gregson is the supreme judge of the Artistic Vehm Gericht, in which the Felix-Hunters believe; and to have it proposed that any work of art should be submitted to his approval was like a proposal among ordinary mortals to send it to the Academy, Mr. Gregson himself being, of course, far too sublime and inappreciable by the masses to be subjected to the Hanging Committee or the Philistine British public.

There was a perceptible difference in the manner of my pupils when their brother had left. It evidently implied a conviction that the oracle of the family had pronounced in some measure in my favour. This will be a great gain to me, if it gives the girls a little trust in me, and enables me to teach them.

At sixteen and eighteen there must be springs of enthusiasm undried up somewhere, for things good and true, if one could only penetrate to them.

I have seen the great Gregson himself, and I like him better than any of his worshippers. Naturally, men who work enough to be artists in almost

any sense, must have more stuff in them than the clique who do nothing but talk about them.

To do any work anything like well, you must care more for it than a mere amateur. And working in any true sense does not only give a firmness of touch to the whole being, but something of humility, even to the most exuberantly-worshipped idol of a clique.

The idol probably knows at least that it is not greater than Titian or Raphael; that to adore it is not the sole test of orthodoxy, and that there have been and are other schools and other masters not altogether without brains.

Mr. Gregson, at all events, does evidently understand that there was a good deal in the world not contemptible before Gregson arose.

He spoke with a real enthusiasm about Sir Joshua and Gainsborough, the sweetness and nobleness of their women, and the childlikeness of their children. He said the comparison between them and Greuze was enough to explain the French Revolution.

He said this, moreover, in reference to that little sketch of mine, which Bertrand insisted on showing

him, and which, he declared, reminded of Sir Joshua.

It was just a sketch in water colour, from memory, of two children I had seen near each other in St. James's Park; one a rosy little queenly, yet child-like creature, in an elaborate toilette, seated in a miniature fairy chariot; the other with a pathetic, pallid, sharp little face, looking down on it, with thin, wasted arms clinging round the shoulders of a tall working man.

"You *saw* that, Miss Bertram," Mr. Gregson said.

And he drew me on to tell the story which had touched me so much.

The man who was carrying the child was tall and finely proportioned, with an erect soldierly carriage, and a grey moustache.

The little one was evidently crippled, but the worn, pale little face had a remarkably sweet intelligent wistful expression.

Some word of sympathy which I could not help speaking seemed to touch the man.

"I am not his father," he said, "but the little

chap is fond of me, somehow. I live away to the east, but I manage to come two or three times a week and give him a trip. It may seem curious, but the little lad's fond of me, and he seems to take his victuals better when I come and take him out. He was as fine a little lad as could be until the mishap."

And then he told us how a careless nurse-girl had let him fall from a perambulator, and had not dared to mention it, so that when the mischief done was at last discovered it was too late to mend it, although they had taken the little sufferer to the best doctors that could be found.

Then he turned to the little one, and the two friends resumed the confidential intercourse, evidently usual between them; the man speaking in gentle caressing tones, and the child answering for the most part with approving little nods and signs.

"Have you ever seen Titian's St. Christopher carrying the infant Christ?" Mr. Gregson suddenly asked me.

I had not, and said so.

"It is strange," he remarked, "but this reminds me, for some reason, of it."

It was strange; for that had been the thought in my mind as I made the sketch.

"It did seem to me just like that!" I took courage to say.

"It *was* like that," he pronounced.

I thought he meant all that I meant, and said naturally, "I wished almost to tell the child's friend what I thought. But then I thought there was another Voice that would tell him that one day, and I had no right to anticipate, or to intrude on him with my thoughts."

He looked at me with a curious mixture of pity and respect.

"The old legends are not mere legends to you," he said.

"The legends?" I said. "That of St. Christopher always seems to me one of the loveliest; but more a parable than a legend. But I did not mean the legends, I meant the Gospels. The '*when* saw we Thee and ministered unto Thee' and the 'In that

ye did it unto the least of these.' I felt I had no right to say a word to spoil that 'when.' "

"I see," he replied gravely. "They are indeed no mere legends to you."

But there was a sad kind of chill in his tone, and in Bertrand's look as their eyes met, which made me feel as if the Gospels were indeed mere legends to them. Then he turned back to my sketch, and said one or two kind, discriminating, critical words as to faults in the drawing of the figures.

"You should study in Paris," he said. "You should not be content with being an amateur."

"I am not an amateur," I said. "I have another profession. I am a governess."

"Miss Bertram is our cousin, and is at present teaching my younger sisters," Bertrand said.

"Your sisters ought to be grateful," Mr. Gregson said pointedly.

"I am, at all events," said Bertrand, "and as far as they have brains enough, one day no doubt they will be."

We were dropping into compliment, which is always a style of conversation in which I have no

current coin at all, when to my relief Mrs. Felix-Hunter came up to us, and in rather an impressive way summoned me away to the piano.

"They are not talking enough," she said, "and I want some one to begin, and Ethel won't. She says she won't play accompaniments to other people's din."

"An indignity my mother thinks you good-natured enough to submit to!" Bertrand said.

But he looked annoyed, and came with me to the piano, and persisted in turning over the pages, which I greatly dislike; especially as he did not always do it at the right moment.

The music answered Mrs. Felix-Hunter's purpose. The confusion of tongues soon became as great as she could have wished.

However, I could hear myself, and it was Beethoven, and that is always pleasure enough for me.

"You play as if the music were your own, and you were speaking through it," Bertrand said, when I had finished.

"Of course it is my own," I said. "It is our own, is it not? the possession of us all; the treasures

of the great master, who could not hear, and yet gave us all so lavishly the joy he could not share."

Mrs. Felix-Hunter seemed satisfied with my music, for she came to me again, and requested that I would go and speak to a German countess who had been attempting an unsuccessful conversation with Helena.

"I am, I confess, a little disappointed, my dear Miss Bertram," she said, as she conducted me to my countess, "that Helena did not get on better. I am particularly anxious that the girls should be equal to carrying on drawing-room conversation. You understand it is not learning or poetry that we want, but ease and grace in conversation. What people say really matters so little in comparison with the manner in which they say it. I am afraid sometimes, after all, patriotic as we are, we ought to have foreigners for foreign languages."

With which suggestive little stimulus she introduced me very graciously to the German countess.

The lady was a Saxon, and had a great deal that was interesting to tell me about one of the great

national Luther festivals that had taken place, not long since, at the Wartburg.

In the course of conversation she mentioned, as belonging to her brother, the Schloss at which Dora and Dorothy are staying, with distant Schönberg connections of ours.

I ventured to ask if she had heard of them.

“Our two charming young English cousins?” she said. “Certainly; my nieces are full of them. Quite sentimental friendships in our German way!” she added. “The twin sisters, Dora and Dorothy Bertram. I don’t know what perfections they don’t combine; German simplicity and feeling and English energy; they are *echt Deutsch* and Shakespeare-English, and at all events *rein menschlich* to the fullest point. Do you then know these unequalled young persons?”

I explained that they were my sisters, and on her appearance, Mrs. Felix-Hunter seemed a little surprised by the countess saying—

“Madame, you have done me an unexpected pleasure. You have introduced to me a young cousin, whose family has kept up intercourse—not with-

out intermarriages—with our own for two hundred years. My child,” she added, as she rose to leave, “you must come and see me at once, without fail. And such German, madame!” she concluded, turning to Mrs. Hunter with a torrent of compliments, which confused me quite as much as they seemed to do Mrs. Felix-Hunter.

It has been rather an eventful evening to me. It is pleasant to be—what was I going to say, “appreciated,” “understood?” How the dear old Long Parliament would laugh at my euphemisms! Pleasant to have one’s appreciation of oneself ratified.

Nevertheless, the recollection which abides with me from this evening is not at all pleasant, but exceedingly sad.

It is the tone of Mr. Gregson, when he seemed to wonder at my making a distinction between the Gospel histories and the legend of St. Christopher; his tone, and Bertrand Hunter’s responsive look.

It seemed to reveal a great gulf, like the earth opening her mouth at the door of my tent, under my feet.

It startled me like the sudden shock of an earthquake. These two, so gentle, so reasonable, so kind to me; and actually thinking the existence, the history of our Lord, a legend, a fable!

Have I, then, just as little really believed in the existence of unbelief as I had of death, or of the world?

Underneath all our questionings and perplexities and scepticisms, what a rock of faith there has been!

Through all our wilfulnesses and perversities, what an atmosphere of love and service we have been breathing!

To me this first close actual contact with unbelief, unbelief in hearts so gentle, so humble, is unutterably painful. It seems not to be so much the shock of an earthquake, even more terrible than that; like getting to the edge of the earth-atmosphere, of everything which we can breathe and which reflects the sunlight, and falling into a great blank of breathless darkness, or rather seeing others falling through it, hopelessly, unconsciously, irremediably and we powerless to help them as we should be to

make creatures of the water breathe in the air by which we live.

But no! there is no such blank.

It is only a black, bad dream.

God is through all, and our not seeing Him does not banish Him. It can only banish His joy from our hearts.

What we think about anything, about the sun and the stars, or about Christ our Lord and Christianity, does not alter the facts in the very least.

That is a rest and comfort to me.

For the ultimate fact remains. God is everywhere. The universe is full of Him, and He is love; love in all, to all.

Bertrand and I have sundry discussions, at breakfast especially, and the old vehemence, I am afraid, comes out in a way scarcely consistent with the dignity of a guide and instructor of youth. However, with Antonia it seems to be producing the effect of convincing her I am no impostor,—no smooth, universal conformist, “facing both ways.”

To brave the family oracle seems to them to

require an amount of courage it by no means demanded of me. I simply felt now and then as if I were with our own boys again in the Long Parliament.

And the things Bertrand says, and more still, the tones in which he says them, rouse me often just to that white heat of indignation in which everything else dissolves.

Especially the way he speaks of literature, and the tone in which he speaks of women.

The great poems of our modern days he sets aside as weakened and womanised by the tinge of the old legends hanging about them or pervading them. They may be useful, possibly, he concedes, at a certain stage, for children, even for boys, probably permanently for women; the literature of the rectory parlour or the Gynæceum.

Instead of these there are certain wonderful creations which often seem to me no creations at all, but a feeble reflection, or a boneless, gelatinous imitation, of the great spontaneous, bony, muscular, despairing, rejoicing, sometimes nobly-aspiring, sometimes unreadably-wicked, old pagan originals.

Guinevere, In Memoriam, the Ode on Immortality, Tintern Abbey, for women and children! and these effeminate copies for men!

How angry it makes me, on account of the literature, and on account of women!

I am persuaded that nothing, nothing in the world but Christianity, will ever do true honour to women, as women.

These Pagans, or rather these mild, reflected, Renaissance semi-demi Pagans, may honour motherhood, may adore beauty, may recognise a few exceptional artist or hero women—Cornelia, Sappho, Cleopatra; but women *as women*, old (or what is worse, middle-aged), ugly (or, what is worse, plain), they will never truly honour; and this, Christianity, in its lowest forms, does; and therefore nothing but Christianity will ever make what Christendom means by a gentleman.

As father once showed us in Renan's "Apôtres"—

"La liberté morale de la femme a commencé le jour où l'Eglise lui a donné un Guide en Jésus.

"La femme n'a jamais eu jusqu'ici une conscience

religieuse, une individualité morale, une opinion propre que dans le christianisme."

Bertrand is civil always to me; but none of our brothers in their worst excesses of schoolboy impertinence ever treated our opinions with the quiet scorn with which he treats his sisters.

I am sure nothing but Christianity, the revelation of the Father and the Son through the Universal Spirit, can effectually and permanently keep off the spirit of caste.

Because Christianity only keeps incessantly before us the superiority of the moral, which is common to humanity, over the intellectual. Because Christianity only never loses sight of the possibility of redemption and restoration for the very lowest.

I told Bertrand to-day I would not accept compliments to my brains at the expense of Antonia's and those of women in general. That poor child has a warm heart and an open mind, whatever may be said for the rest.

Another point of Bertrand's Paganism has come out to-day. He was denying the mercifulness of

hospitals. He said the Hindu Ganges was a conclusion of decrepitudes more humane and more moral.

He gave quite an heroic and pathetic picture of an affectionate Hindu family gathered reverentially around an old grandmother, and tenderly conveying her to death by the sacred river; and contrasted it with our wilful retaining of life through agony by intoxicating the brain with stimulants, or prolonging it to imbecility in alms-houses, where young lives have to be sacrificed to old. "Instead of immolating our old people to the Ganges," he said, "we immolate the young and the living to the dying or virtually dead."

"They immolate *themselves*," I said, "and live doubly by the sacrifice. Those who so lose their lives live double instead of half their true life; the heart, the soul lives,—*we* live by such sacrifices."

"It is orthodox to say so, I know," he said; "but it is difficult to see it; for instance, in the case of hospital nurses, scarcely the noblest of their race, or of women wearing out life till fifty as props of some selfish paralytic relation. Besides, if self-sacrifice is

indeed the noblest thing, why don't the old people practise it? Who knows, when I come to that stage, if I might not be Christian enough to request, myself, to be taken to the Ganges instead of to the Home for Incurables?"

I argue so badly; such sophisms make me too indignant to answer them.

But the tears came into my eyes, and I had difficulty in choking them down. I thought of Miss Betsey Lovel and Miss Lavinia, and all the holy tendernesses and mellowness of character that had come out of feebleness and old age for them; and of course it would have been of no use to speak of Miss Betsey and Miss Lavinia to Bertrand.

I could only blunder out in my vehement abrupt way as I rose from the luncheon-table—

"It is quite plain that if Christianity were to become obsolete, as some people say it has, in a few years we should have infanticide instead of children's hospitals, the Ganges or suicide instead of infirmaries, and Zenanas instead of homes. It seems to me that *close beyond* the edge of Christianity you fall, not into the *shallows* of Paganism, but into its *abysses*."

But in the evening Bertrand came to me and said,—

“Cousin Monica” (he insists on the whole family calling me Cousin Monica; he says it is a dignified title for me, as good as that of those curious German Protestant abbesses, and a distinction for my pupils, in the acknowledgment of relationship) — “Cousin Monica,” he said (it was in the conservatory, where I was sketching a great pure translucent orchis-blossom), “you are seriously offended with me; and I am going away to-morrow.”

“I am not offended with you,” I said, “but I see plainly what things you say mean; and I cannot always speak as plainly as I should like, and as I think I ought, partly on account of your sisters, and partly because I am too indignant.”

“It seems to me you speak plainly enough,” he replied drily. “You have told me at various times that I am no gentleman, that I am a lazy *dilettante*, and that a man who breaks stones on the roads is better than a *dilettante*; and to-day that I am no better than a murderer; not an ineffective climax.”

"I only made a summary of what you said yourself," I said.

"Just such a summary as the pope's Syllabus makes of the tendencies of modern thought," he said. "But don't unsay anything. I am going away to-morrow, and it will be wholesome food for meditation. You don't ask where I am going?"

"No, why should I think of such a thing?" I said.

"Certainly; only I happen to be going to Combe Regis," he replied, "where my brother Victor's curacy is, and where he says he often sees your mother and sisters. Could I take anything for you?"

I had nothing to send. I am always writing. He went away.

But in a few minutes he came back and said,—
"You have just finished that orchis, have you not? Might I not take it to your mother, as a sign that you are not altogether without interests among us, and that you are well enough to do other things besides giving those magical lessons in history which are transforming Antonia's life?"

I thought she would like it, and I gave it him.

Can I really have said so many uncivil things to him?

Bertrand's appearance has certainly greatly improved my relations with my pupils, notably with Antonia.

The child actually begins to be a child, and to believe in me with an enthusiasm of girlish devotion which bewilders me.

It seems that their previous governess was a person with a shallow satirical knowledge of the world, who summarily classified Antonia as one of the daring "original" young women of a certain style of modern novels. "Vous êtes une originale qui ne se désoriginalisera jamais!" was her sarcastic verdict and reply to all Antonia's eager questionings. And the poor child does really long to disentangle herself from all kinds of things which perplex her; and before this clever criticism, of course, all her eager, crude young thought naturally crumpled up, as under fire or frost.

Ah, if for her there could only be the old *Causeries du Lundi!*

But the only person who paid any attention to her questions was Bertrand, who replied to them with a half-contemptuous, half-compassionate, "So soon at the bars of the cage! so soon at the beginning of the questions which have no answer and no end!"

And now she turns to me, and is ready to drink in what I believe and tell her, like a patient in fever, parching with thirst, who is suddenly transferred from some dreadful barbarous treatment of "no light, no air, and no water," to cool draughts and fresh breezes and sunshine.

We began with English history, in the biographical form, which is the only living history to me.

We took Alfred the Great, with all the biographies and notices, and original writings of his own and his contemporaries we could find.

It is curious to see the effect the discovery of the great English hero made on her.

"Cousin Monica," she said, "he actually lived!

I thought he was about as real as Jack the Giant Killer. And here, under the haze and cloud of all these lovely old legends, I see him, not melting away, but growing solid, growing flesh and blood and heart and soul before me. And the whole world, even our own world, even the fashionable women in Hyde Park; and the ragged children in St. James's Park; and Westminster Abbey, and the palaces and the alleys, and the Queen's guards, and the British Museum, and the people I meet, seem to me to grow out of shadow-land, with him, into flesh and blood and heart and soul, into brothers and sisters. All begins to grow real to me, from the old Greeks, to Ethel and Helena, and even to Ethel's mediævalisms."

To-day we have had a most delightful holiday. Aunt Winifred came and fetched us, Antonia and me, to spend the day at Aunt O'Brien's.

By the freedom and delight of it, I felt how different is the atmosphere I have been breathing.

Aunt Winifred seemed to me actually giving out

light, she made it all so warm and bright about her.

Sometimes, during the day, it made me think in a curious way of Elijah and Elisha. She loved my father so dearly, owed everything to him, just as much as I do, and knew it, and felt the world, as I did, just a great shelterless, waterless plain, she said, without him.

And now she seems *more* instead of *less*, for his departing, as if his mantle had fallen on her.

She has a little orphanage of her own. Aunt O'Brien has allowed her to transform one of the gardeners' cottages just outside the gates into it, and Aunt O'Brien herself is quite interested, and often forgets, when any of the children are ill, that she cannot walk so far without peril.

Aunt Winifred and I had a very long quiet talk, by ourselves; for Austin was there, and he and Antonia seemed greatly interested in making researches in the library, about Alfred the Great.

I have not seen Austin so much interested in anything since our sorrow. The eager fresh delight of the young girl seemed to infect him.

And how beautiful the green world looked after London !

If imagination consists, as some one said, in giving large preponderance to the far-off in time and space over the present and near, I have certainly very little imagination.

But Wordsworth speaks of imagination as "penetrative," penetrating into the hidden depths of the near and the present.

If I have any activity of imagination, that is the kind it is of.

During these last months I have just lived in the houses and in the lives of the people around me, trying to penetrate the crusts under which there must be, and are, fountains of true human life, as much in the dullest routine of fashionable conventionality as in the most savage disorder of poverty and vice.

I have lived in Mrs. Felix-Hunter's decorated rooms, and among her decorated people, with occasionally a glimpse among the shoeless little ones in St. James's Park, so that when I came to the garden and fields and blue far-off distances at Aunt

O'Brien's, it was like a new revelation of nature to me.

Just to sit in the rock-garden and listen to the trickling of the little stream into the stone basin, and out of it, among the ferns, and to hear the cool rustle of the leaves of the great green chestnuts and the humming of the bees among the limes,—it seemed like some mystic newly-discovered music of the future,—and yet interwoven with such music from the past!

Yes; it was the sound which delighted me most; the great slow stream of silence, with the little rustlings and cooings and flutterings and water-droppings which broke it.

The absence of silence makes the beauty of the sunsets and the green glades of park and wood that we certainly see in London too theatrical, too much like scene-painting. However, if you get up early enough, you do hear the chirping of the sparrows, like the revolving of a water-wheel.

But oh! the delight it was to sit and bathe in that sea of quiet!

And by degrees Aunt Winifred grew to under-

stand my life at the Felix-Hunters, and make me understand it better by telling her about it.

At dinner there was a delightful woman who has devoted herself to the matronship of a great work-house infirmary, one of the many whom Christianity, at the age when beauty and youth have faded, raises, as Renan says, "to noble and worthy callings, equal to those of the most highly-esteemed men."

The conversation naturally turned on all kinds of Christian work, especially women's work, educational, nursing, benevolent.

As we drove home together Antonia was rather silent.

But towards the end she said,—

"Cousin Monica, you have opened to me new worlds worth living in, and a life worth living. But, do you know, your brother said a curious thing to me to-day. He said I seemed to have an enthusiasm for Alfred, as if his life were the fountain-head of new life and the new gospel to humanity; which indeed in a great sense it has been to me. And he asked me if you had ever read the Gospels themselves with me? I said, of course, we heard them

read at church, in the Second Lessons. He said they were not only Second Lessons, but a biography more interesting than that of Alfred, more detailed, more authentic, and of considerably more importance to us. Will you read them with me?"

Austin has evidently no wish that others should share his uncertainties.

We spend the Sundays and part of the week, just now, in the country-place which the Felix-Hunters rent for the summer.

This afternoon Antonia and I were sitting, reading the Gospel of St. Mark, in a cool glade of the woods, when her father came upon us in his solitary Sunday stroll.

He smiled with peculiar kindness when he saw how we were occupied, and passed on, saying he would not on any account interrupt us.

But in the evening he came and sate beside me in one of the deep bay-windows of this fine old Elizabethan house, and began to speak of mother and of our grandfather Leigh, and asked if she had ever mentioned a sister of his.

"You mean little Maud?" I said, "who was so long ill?"

"She loved your mother and old Mr. Leigh more than any one in the world," he replied. And slowly, as if with a rusted key, in a lock seldom turned, he drew out the sacred legend of the house, the loving life and early death of little Maud Hunter.

"She was too good to live, I suppose," he said, "at least, to live among us."

He couldn't tell why, he said, but from the time I came into the house I had reminded him of her—not that I was feeble or gentle as she was—I could do a thousand things she could not do. And he had seen me, he added with a smile, indignant and roused as he never saw her. But I seem, in some way, to have given him the impression she did, of having something solid and living to rest on; of having at the bottom of the heart, not a craving, but rest; of being anchored, and therefore free to sway hither and thither, in sympathy with the currents of other people's lives. And he said he wished to tell me that if I could bring any of the children to such a resemblance to Maud, he shouldn't object to it. He

liked to see me reading the Bible with Antonia to-day. And he concluded with, "There is not much anchorage worth having here." Then he rose and walked away, as if he were afraid I might suggest that there is anchorage which would hold good for him and for us all, as well as for Maud and for me.

CHAPTER IX.

The Mother's Note-book.

THE children are scattered far and wide now, locally and socially, carrying on their work on all kinds of levels.

The difficulties Monica encounters in her educational work seem as wide apart from those of Margaret as the New Testament from Voltaire. And yet in the New Testament age itself there were just as many contemporaneous anachronisms. The fishermen of Galilee, Pilate, the most excellent governor Felix, were on levels of civilisation quite as varied.

Margaret has a quiet Teutonic contentedness which makes this village life very congenial to her.

She delights also in the very simple elements into which religious life and teaching are resolved in this village life; and the primitive duties to which we are recalled.

She says it is like the west-country hills and Tors, like living amidst the granite, among the roots of the world. You are not at a very high elevation, but the flowers and rock-forms are the flowers and rocks of the highest mountains.

"It is so good for one," she said to me yesterday, "to have to call things again by their plain childish names; to say 'You must not be cross,' instead of 'You should not be over-sensitive;' 'You must not be sulky,' instead of 'You should not indulge in morbid feeling;' to have to fight against such plain unveiled faults as idleness, ill-temper, or self-will, instead of having your enemies hidden behind sentimental masques."

And the mixture of work for hands and brain is so good for women; both not being *dilettante*, but real; for instance, cookery, not spasmodic and æsthetic, but necessary and daily, if we are to have any dinner.

The children who come in turns to scrub the rooms do get a little genuine industrial training; and Margaret's way of lowering her always soft voice, instead of raising it, when there is a din, so

that they have to be quiet to hear, has told in a civilising way on the village manners.

Then we have sundry small schemes of rewards, five or six of the most exemplary taken a country walk for flower-gathering, and then the flowers inspected, not tossed idly away because of the lavishness with which they are given, but made nosegays of, and afterwards brightening the cottage windows or some sick-chamber for many a day; and now and then sent in hampers to our old parishioners in the dingy streets. It is like giving the children an Aladdin's lamp, to show them that the flowers on every bush and bank *are* jewels and priceless treasures; that what we need to lead us into a magic world of delights is just the rubbing of the lamp, just the anointing of our eyes to see, and the inspiring of our hearts to love and serve.

And the mere teaching of pretty, instead of senseless childish games, is something; "rhythmic movements," to speak pedantically, have their share in civilisation.

Margaret tries to make the children's pleasures just open out of the common things around them;

and especially she tries to make them think of animals, not as enemies to be entrapped, or slaves to be got the most out of, but, according to St. Francis D'Assisi's "Canticum Solis," as dumb or infant children of the great family.

May and Dot help in this. And she has actually succeeded in establishing, even among some of the boys, a "party," at least, in favour of the protection rather than the destruction of birds' nests.

We heard, the other day, of a Breton school-master who established a society among his boys for the protection of small birds, with coronations and processions; but Margaret thought it would be better, here, to take our English parliamentary method, and govern by party; in other words, to work towards a good public opinion.

Meetings, coronations, speeches of approbation, she thought likely rather to shame and scare than to attract English boy-nature.

On the other hand, the disposition to pet and cherish animals is as inherent in boys, she thinks, as the disposition to tease; and she thinks, in the

least things as well as the greatest, the surest method is to call out the good and conquer the evil with it.

In this mission to the animal world, May takes her full share. Her faith in the goodness of Dot has opened her sympathies to all the dumb creatures; and May's small weekly revenues go largely in the purchase of Pictorial Animal Worlds, wherewith the cottages are freely decorated.

So that May has her "mission" among the flowers and animals, and also in that important region of the child-world, the hours of play.

I wish, sometimes, Monica and her pupils could be transported for a time into this natural life of ours. They are too deep in imitative Paganisms and imitative mediævalisms, and all kinds of literary and artistic over-subtleties. Lady Katharine was bemoaning similar difficulties to-day as she drove me to Combe Monachorum.

"What is to be done to give these over-civilised young women the counter-development of real work of hand and arm?" she said.

"If they marry and have children of their own," I said, "that scarcely does it. They never even have

the privilege of washing and dressing their own babies, or of carrying them out to walk, or doing the real nursing for them in their childish sicknesses."

"Well, two threatened evils may encounter and neutralise each other," she concluded. "We are menaced in all directions with a famine of domestic servants. And we are in the depths of a famine of wholesome domestic work for gentlewomen. Perhaps the two will correct each other."

Victor Hunter brought his brother Bertrand to-day, with a drawing of Monica's, a sketch of a stately white orchis, so pure and individual, it seemed as if it must have a baptismal personal name of its own, to distinguish it from any other flower in the world.

He did not say much about Monica. He seemed to care more to listen to Margaret and May, and determined to individualise us all, down to Dot.

He observed parenthetically that his youngest sister Antonia is enthusiastic about Monica and English History. And he said to Margaret, in the garden, she told me, apropos to something she said

about the Bible lessons to the children, that all our family seemed to have a kind of *imperial* way of speaking of the Christian religion; instead of half apologizing for adhering to it, as so many more or less believing people do, we seemed to think, he said, the apologies should come from the other side. An *apologia pro vita mea* seemed to us natural enough, but an *apologia* for the Church or the Bible quite out of date, after these eighteen hundred years.

He came back after he had taken leave, and asked if it would be a liberty to ask to keep Monica's orchis a little while longer; he rather wished, he added with some hesitation, to show it to his friend Gregson.

And he concluded with a little tender compliment to me.

He said my name and my father's had had a kind of legendary sacredness to him from his infancy. His own mother and Victor's, Mr. Felix-Hunter's first wife, had been a great friend of his Aunt Maud's—our darling little sufferer Maud—and he remembered, to this day, the kind of voice in which she used to say, "Grace," and "Mr. Leigh."

He included, also, I could feel, another name, which he did not express.

I am rather glad those two young men are not sons of the present Mrs. Felix-Hunter; not that Monica has said anything disloyal about the mistress of the house she lives in; but I have an impression.

"Imperial, not apologetic:" is that the tone then in which our children seem to others to represent Christianity?

Apologies ought, certainly, to be out of date, after the Christian Church has existed on earth for eighteen hundred years.

But meantime how is the tide going with my Austin?

Letters from Walter and my brother Harry.

Harry writes enthusiastically of Walter; he says something like what Bertrand Hunter said, that he unfurls his Christianity as simply and naturally, when occasion comes, as his ship her English flag.

Walter writes rather less fervently of his uncle, although he warms towards the close. He says Harry sometimes makes him think of an advertise-

ment he once saw of a "domesticated gentlewoman," as if a gentlewoman were a kind of wild beast, needing to be tamed. Uncle Harry seems thoroughly tamed. The establishment is small; and the babies pervade it in a fashion which he supposes is half colonial, and half French, and Uncle Harry accepts the humblest nursery offices as a matter of course.

But he says he leads a most busy life, the house is open to all people in trouble, and Uncle Harry is a domestic oracle with all the negro "aunties."

His Aunt Thérèse, he says, is charming in her easy way, and adores her husband, but apparently has no idea that the life he leads is not the most natural and ideal in the world for an English gentleman. But Harry's art is limited to making drawings for the babies, which the elder babies, even already, begin to neglect for art of their own.

But, nevertheless, Walter's verdict is that Uncle Harry is more of a true man and Englishman than ever before.

He says Harry does not ask many questions about the old home, but he has a way of drawing one on to talk of it; and then a quite different ex-

pression sometimes comes over his face, as if the *whole* of Uncle Harry were looking out of the eyes, for a minute. It is an expression that quickly passes; but Walter says, when it has passed, in the quiet that follows, for a little while, he has now and then observed how worn and aged his face is.

Dear old brother, what I would give to see him again!

But Walter says he never breathes a word of any wish for a return to England.

Letters from Dora and Dorothy.

Dorothy has become enthusiastically German, thinks the whole nation becoming an army for defence of the fatherland, smitten into unity in a moment by the threatened attack, the grandest idea and the noblest fulfilment in the world; sees no perils in the military spirit, thinks it the most ennobling carrying out of self-sacrifice into every corner of every fireside; thinks German domestic life, with its blending of romance and homeliness, the most perfect ideal; and that the whole range of feminine excellence is embraced in the destiny which includes

Braut and *Hausmutter*; believes all our English "woman questions," and the whole of what is *diletante* among our young men, would be settled, or would vanish without difficulty, if we could revert to the true old Teutonic type.

Dora is more composed, has a little lingering fondness for the comparative position held by Englishwomen, not *Brauts*; and reserves a corner of her heart for the French connections they are to visit.

Monica's pupil, Antonia Hunter, has been spending a few days here with her brother Victor.

She speaks with a young girl's enthusiasm of adoring friendship of my child.

Ah, was it then for some good, dimly perceptible even already, that the old home was broken up?

The perfect ripened fruit, we know, is not the end in itself, but is, after all, only an envelope of seeds, which must fall, and be scattered, and become, themselves, not fruit only, but roots of fruit-bearing trees, bearing fruit "whose seed is in itself."

One little hint that this child Antonia dropped has given me the greatest comfort.

She said to me quietly one day that of all their reading together nothing interests her so much as an hour she and Monica spend alone in Monica's room in the evening, reading the Bible.

And she says it was Austin who first suggested that they should begin to read the Gospels together; my Austin, who yet dares not say to me that he has regained his grasp on the old truths!

There is much talking on various sides now, in depreciation of the value of the Holy Scriptures. On one hand a vague, crumbling criticism, or rather terror of other people's criticism; on the other, a vague feeling that between the Divine words and our feeble minds we need some softening or interpretative medium; on one side a suspicion that the Old Book is too uncertain and imperfectly human to be definitely and authoritatively a divine message to people with claims to high culture; on the other, that it is too awfully and mysteriously Divine for common eyes to penetrate.

"Don't send us to a book," some people say, "to

a dry, ancient Scripture; the living Spirit inspires humanity still."

"Don't venture to lay open the sacred oracles to an ignorant private interpretation," others say. "There is a Church, a living authoritative body, which existed before the Book, which alone preserved the Book, and which alone can securely unveil it."

Truth, of course, there is on both sides.

We do need the living Spirit who inspired the authors of the Book to inspire the life of the readers now.

And we *have* the Christian life which existed before the Book, to interpret and to diffuse it still.

The truth of God is not distributed by lifeless machinery; it never was, and it never will be.

But the Book itself, *in itself*, seems to me the answer to both these depreciations.

I believe we may safely leave the arguments against its universal adaptation and circulation to refute each other.

One of the objections, however, which makes me most indignant is, that it is not suitable for young people.

It certainly was not written for young girls, or by young girls. But why is it that against this English literature of ours which has sprung up around it, is brought just the opposite objection, that it is apparently written with a prudish sense that there ought to be nothing in it unfit for young ladies to read?

Why is it that to the literature of all others moulded by the Bible, foreign countries come for the literature pure enough to put into the hands of all?

The consuming fire of its divine purity scorches the evil things in humanity, which it does not hesitate to recognise as existing.

It does depict the world as a great hospital; but pathological science in its pages never takes the place for a moment of the art of healing. It shields all who read it reverently from the contagion of the sins it describes, by always making us feel that sin is not a necessity of humanity, but its disease, and by enlisting our whole sympathies on the side of health and healing.

The human imperfections it presents for criti-

cism to investigate are just the proofs it is not *only* human, not a rigid construction of diplomatically-cautious theologians, but a growth of divine thought through human hearts.

And as to its requiring interpretation, which of the commentaries or confessions written to explain it does not contain for the next generation a thousandfold more difficulties to be explained than the Book itself?

It is, indeed, not a folding up and veiling of Divine truth, but an unfolding and a revelation.

I believe, in my inmost heart, it is the strongest bond of our English Christian and social life.

It has a common interest for men and women on every level of rank and culture. It is common ground between every section of our Church, and our nonconforming sects. It is a common prayer-book, a common hymn-book, a common education.

It is as comprehensible and as dear to the slumbering passive minds of the old village people here, as to the world-sharpened wits of our London parish.

Indeed, I believe people exaggerate the differences really existing between those for whom the Bible is the great guide in religion and morals. For in the Bible all theology is moral, and all morals are theological; a combination which, when steadfastly persisted in, does tend, I think, more than anything to soften mere external divisions.

If we believe that the root of sin is selfishness, that God is love, and therefore that love is holiness; that the Atonement is God restoring us to Himself by the sacrifice of Himself; that salvation *begins* in the forgiveness which reconciles us to God, and *means* the overcoming of the sin which separates from God, what room is there for deep inward separation?

Sweet it is to me to think that Margaret is teaching these little ones the sacred words, which will come back to them, as I have seen, and see daily, in long hours of sickness and on dying beds, with the familiarity which makes them steal quietly like music into the heart when the mind is too wearied to grasp anything new; and that my Monica is doing the same in that luxurious home.

CHAPTER X.

Monica's Note-book.

BERTRAND HUNTER has come back from Combe. He seems to understand something of what mother is. Not that he said much about her. But there was a tone in the few words he did say which I have not felt in his way of speaking about any one else.

He also quoted Arthur Clough's "Highland Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich" in reference to our Margaret, whom he seems greatly to admire.

I think he said his brother Victor pointed it out:—

'How the old knightly religion, the chivalry, semi-Quixotic,
Stirs in the veins of a man at seeing some delicate woman
Serving him, toiling for him and the world * * *
Milking the kine in the field, like Rachel watering cattle,
Or with pail upon head, like Dora, beloved of Alexis,
Comely with well-poised pail over neck arching soft to the shoulders,
Comely in gracefulest act, one arm uplifted to stay it;
Or doing household work, as many sweet girls I have looked at,
Needful household work, which some one, after all, must do,
Needful, graceful therefore, as washing, cooking, and scouring;
Or, if you please, with the fork in the garden uprooting potatoes.'

We do not have so many discussions as we used, which is almost a pity, because it does not give me the opportunity of showing that I can keep my temper, which is a little difficult to me, when I think people are sophistical; but which I had so determined to do.

To-day he said rather abruptly, after Mr. Hunter had left, when we were dispersing to go to the school-room, that he thought of going into business; he believed I approved of men being in business.

I thought at first he was alluding to the scornful suspicions Antonia had entertained as to my simulation of sympathy with her father about the money-market; and I felt myself crimson, at the recollection of the injustice, and said hastily I knew very little about business or men of business. Then, he corrected himself, as if he thought I was displeased at his claiming my interest in his affairs.

"I know," he said in a chilled tone, "your family have kept on higher levels, in every way. But I think it would be in your mother's way to

help any one who was creeping up even the first step."

"I did not mean that," I could not help saying. "My father thought nobly-conducted commerce the pioneer and protector of freedom of all good kinds, and therefore of truth of all kinds; and he said the great employers of labour are the true successors of the great feudal lords."

"I understand. He thought to be makers of things, and therefore masters of men, a nobler calling than to be turners-over of money?"

"Of course, in the lower forms in which we came in contact with it in his parish that was obvious," I said. "A shoemaker's for instance, is, of course, a worthier calling than a pawnbroker's."

"Or than that of a painter of sign-posts, or of valentines, or, still more, of a valuer of other people's sign-posts or valentines," he said, smiling. "Well, I think of being a shoemaker on our level; shoemaker and blacksmith to the great iron horse. My uncle has offered me a share in his engineering works. And I half think of accepting it."

I felt pleased.

"Although I have to begin by a regular apprenticeship in the workshops," he said, "really learning the practical work of the trade."

I liked that, and I said so.

"You will still shake hands with me, then, Cousin Monica," he said, "even as a grimy son of toil?"

"Even?" I said.

"You think it would be step upward, instead of downward?"

Of course I do. Did he not tell me he has been doing nothing all his life but talk about other people's work; unless it might be, now and then, buying it?

And so he has gone to the north.

All other interests and delights grow pale to me, compared to the delight of watching this new interest and joy in the Bible opening on Antonia.

All these things, all this old, eternal, ever-fresh divine light dawned so gradually on us, or at least on me, that the first thing I was conscious of was

not so much the light as the mists, the earth-born smoke and fogs, which obscured it; not so much the truths as the perplexities; why, being there, the light did not banish the darkness; why having been so long there, there were so much cold and darkness left, so much groping and stumbling in the darkness still? But to Antonia it is the light, the Sun itself, which is consciously the new revelation. And, to watch her mind and heart opening to it, is like living in the primitive ages of Christianity; better than watching the unfolding of the truest poet's May that ever flooded the woods and fields with its wealth of green and flowers.

I scarcely think it can be common in any English families; but to Antonia the Bible seems really an unknown world. Or, which is worse, the words seem to have had for her a sort of surface familiarity, not the dear familiarity of sacred early associations, but the vulgarising familiarity of acquaintance without intimacy.

They have family prayers in the morning; but Mr. Hunter has not time for reading the Bible, except on Sunday mornings, when he reads a psalm.

One of the governesses, indeed, used to insist on the Daily Lessons, without diminishing the daily tale of bricks, which tended to make the Daily Lessons as dry as the straw Pharaoh's taskmasters refused to furnish.

Meantime, Antonia was always hearing droppings of conversation of various kinds; on one hand, a virtual withdrawal of the Holy Scriptures behind an ornamental screen of religious books and formularies; on the other, suspicions as to their being Holy Scriptures at all, suggestions of bad arithmetic, bad history, bad astronomy and geology, and perhaps not much better theology; of their resemblance to the mythical legends of other races and religions; which had the effect of simply causing her to cease reading them, either for daily devotion—for which purpose she substituted various little manuals, or as the historical sources of our religion. All quite vague, scarcely acknowledged to herself, but the effect anything but vague. To her "the oracles were dumb."

"No voice of weeping heard, and loud lament."

No sighing of the lost voices through "haunted spring and dale," no

"Drear and dying sound,
In consecrated earth,
Or on the holy hearth."

Unnoticed, unconsciously to her, the sacred voices ceased. But they had ceased. There was "no voice, nor any to answer."

Happily for her, the rush of the terrible questions life brings had not yet come; when the heart cuts and wounds itself like the unanswered priests of old, crying to the god that slumbers, or is not, for the fire that never comes.

It was merely a lifelessness, an absence of meaning, of any centre to gather human beings and human thoughts together; a dull absence of hope and aim and trust. As yet, all slumbering and passive in the slumber of her heart. But how terrible it might have been, if the silence had waked her, as it sometimes does, instead of the living voice!

For this silence, this dulness, this absence of hope, meant nothing less than the absence of God.

No assault had been made on her faith; she had not been driven from position to position. It had been merely a noiseless withdrawal of the elements in which faith lives.

But the result was quite definite.

It was a vacuum.

She did not feel sure enough about the possibility of communication with anything Unseen and spiritual to seek communion with a life above her own.

She did not feel sure enough of the fact, or of the possibility of any manifestation of the spiritual, to care to examine the records of such manifestations.

She had an impression that such an examination would end in making her give up going to church, like Bertrand. And she knew this would scandalize the household, whilst Bertrand himself would probably not think it feminine.

She was not in any distress on account of all this. Life, certainly school-room life, and she thought especially fashionable life, for grown-up people, seemed to her for the most part dull and

uninteresting; but it was probably in the nature of things that it should be so. Other people got used to the nature of things, and probably she might.

Besides, there were the glorious exceptions always conceivable at sixteen. Her novels told her of possibilities of a vivid life, of finding some wonderful absorbing destiny of love and rapturous mutual comprehension, of perfect understanding and being understood, when the oracles would indeed not be "dumb," but the whole world would become but a "consecrated earth," a home, a "holy hearth," and she the priestess of that consecrated life and that divine hearth-fire.

Or at the worst she might become the self-sacrificed heroine, on the tragic side of the story, and end with the self-immolation which is its own reward, especially when it only comes in the last chapter.

To about this state Antonia had arrived when I came to Mr. Hunter's.

The first thing (she told me) that interested her in me, was her perception that to me, at least, life was not *dull*. Whatever it was, not dull. Thank

God, that was a word not known in our early vocabulary; whatever else was lacking or superfluous, dulness was not in our home, dulness in any of its translations, fashionable *ennui* or religious "dreariness." Father would never let us sing one of the hymns which tell God they find this world a "dreary" wilderness.

And sorrow has made this *less* possible to us, I think, than before. These piteous little wettings of your feet and bemoaning yourself, by shallow waters of small despondencies, are not to be ventured on in a sea which descends sheer from the shore to the depth no line has ever fathomed.

However this was what Antonia thought she saw in me.

She did not attribute it to religion. She thought I had probably a bright temperament; and she thought it might be partly due to poverty, making pleasures rare and fresh, and making work really necessary.

In which she was in a great measure right. At first she told me, moreover, she did suspect me of

“pretending” a little, especially in the matter of her father and the money-market.

But she said she envied me from the first week I was in the house; she hated me and admired me alternately, but always envied me for the possession she thought I had.

She told me she concluded, on the whole, that the chief ingredient was poverty; and she wished sometimes there might be a revolution, or a commercial crisis, or anything which would make work a necessity for her.

Whatever else would make it worth while for her to take trouble to multiply the mediocre art, music, painting, sculpture, already superabounding in the world? What difference would it ever be to any one whether she knew two languages or seventy? And as to philanthropic work, one half of the charitable people seemed to her to think that the greatest mischief was caused by the indiscreet labours of the other half; so that an armed neutrality seemed the safest ground as to philanthropy; and armed neutrality unfortunately furnished little occupation.

She was at this stage when Bertrand first came home, and something in that conversation with him and Mr. Gregson seems to have given her thoughts another direction, just a glimpse of a possibility that these "fresh springs" which she thought she saw in me might be from a real living fountain within, not from some unattainable external reservoir inaccessible at least to her.

Moreover she began, she said, to *love* me, to have a delight and appreciation, and I know not what, for another human being which she had never felt before, and which is, itself, a fresh spring of life.

Her novels had not spoken of this great human joy as coming in that form. But to Antonia it did come in the form of a devoted friendship.

She had never read our beloved Jeremy Taylor's Essay on Friendship as being "the greatest bond in the world"—"the abiding love in all love," "the marriage of souls."

And she had read and heard a great deal of shrewd and satirical reprehension of school-girl attachments, and was in wholesome fear of being, or

being thought, sentimental. But it did so happen that the child so loved me. She thought me true, disinterested, good, and just that unutterable *something more* which mysteriously binds heart to heart.

Then came our study of Alfred the Great.

The past rose before her as a new wide world of real life.

History became a reality for her.

The little fragment of time and of the world in which we happen to live ceased to be a disconnected ice-block floating in a foggy unexplored ocean, and revealed itself as the outlying shore of a great continent of human life; or rather, perhaps (as it now appears to me), as a little visible thinly-peopled island, separated by a narrow strait from the great populous mainland which is invisible, but populous with those who have emigrated to it from this island shore. It was about this time that we spent the first day at Aunt O'Brien's.

She came back full of Austin's suggestion that we should read the Gospels together.

A hope dawned on her that, at the heart of this

new real world of history, she should find a sacred history more real than any other.

What if, after all, the crowning height of that great mainland of the past should be crowned with the Holy City coming down out of heaven from God?

What if, after all, she should find there the river which makes glad the city of God, and should find these were the living springs which she thought kept my heart fresh?

Then she went to stay a few days with her brother Victor, at Combe.

And in my mother and Margaret she saw again (she said) that steady purpose and fresh interest in life, which she had first seen in me, as if things were done by a *command*, and with the certainty of not being in vain.

Especially, this struck her in our mother, because it was evident that her life had been shattered and shaken to its foundations, and yet that the foundations were not shaken; that she was not working from a partly-spent impulse, but from a living motive, still.

"I felt," she said, "that you had all One to serve who cannot be pleased except with our very best, but who will never scorn our best because it is so poor. I cannot tell how else to express what I mean. I felt you were really like the disciples in the Gospels, with a living Master."

This she told me to-night; and I think nothing in my life ever made me so thankful and glad.

If it can indeed be possible that something of Christian life amongst us has made the Gospel histories credible to Antonia, on the other hand, the new life which streams from the Gospel histories day by day visibly into her heart makes them seem doubly living to me.

So it is that growth by Divine law and through Divine life means not merely the growing thing itself becoming stronger, larger, fuller, but reproduction, multiplication, tenfold, a hundredfold, a thousandfold.

Yes, this that I am seeing in Antonia must be conversion, the turning of the whole being from

self to God. Not a reviving of early impressions. Something altogether new, as in the early days of Christianity.

The Gospels which began to interest her as the most real and wonderful of histories, have become to her something infinitely more; not only the Manifestation of the Perfect Ideal Life in the Past, but the Revelation of a Life-giving Life in the Present; the manifestation and the gift of Eternal Life now.

On us it dawned so slowly; we never remember the first grey streaks breaking from the night. But never have I seen anything like the joy of this dawning of the light of God, of God, Himself the Light, on a soul.

All the beautiful things in the world which picture it, dawn, spring, the rainbow on the dark cloud, the opening of a flower, seem as if this glorious dawning of Himself on a human soul must have been in the thought of God, as the end and crown of all when He created these visible types.

No wonder there is joy in heaven among His angels, when they see it!

No wonder heaven is heaven, if this joy is continually springing up afresh, as it must be there.

No wonder God takes His own to share it, when the fragment of their service here is done.

Ah, I begin to have a little glimpse of the blessedness, the ever fresh springing joy, to which our father is gone.

For what is it?

"The Universe is full of God," she says, "and God is love. God is love, and loves me. And I love Him and He knows it. And He tells it me a thousand times a day, in every page of the Bible, in every kindness that comes to me from every one, from everywhere, in every fresh joy that springs up in my heart. And I tell it Him over and over, in prayer and hymn, and in silence beyond utterance; and I know He loves me enough to care to hear again and again that I love Him! Did he not ask St. Peter three times?"

"And I am only at the beginning, at the very beginning of it, and there is Infinity to learn, Infinity of Love, and Eternity to learn it in."

"The universe is full of love, Monica; and the measure of what the love means is Gethsemane and the cross."

"No wonder that the prodigal could not finish the little speech he made in the far country, on the father's breast.

"We make so many wise and elaborate little speeches, Monica, in the far country. But when once He finds us, the speeches, the words, the thoughts, are all dissolved away. *The father fell on his neck and kissed him.* That is what the father *did*. It does not say what the reconciled child did. *'This my son was dead, and he is alive again, he was lost, and is found. It is meet we should make merry and be glad.'* That is what the father *said*. It does not say what the son said. I suppose he did and said nothing, Monica. He just laid his head on the father's bosom, and felt all through him the father's joy."

"Oh, Monica," she said, "never more to have to choose for oneself, to live for oneself! to have a Master to surrender one's whole will and life to!"

“Never more to drift! To be piloted.

“Never more to wander aimlessly! To be led; to follow!

“To follow not steps, but a Voice; not a law, but a Lord. To be a servant to the very height and depth of one’s being, just because one is first a child, a reconciled forgiven child. To know that actually, constantly, He will take the least services we render any one, as done to Him.

“To have everything become ours, everything beautiful in everything, everything good in every one, because we are Christ’s, and He is the Light of the World, the source of all beauty and goodness. Free of the whole universe, just because we are freed from self, from the wretched bondage of having to live as if we were our own, to build our own life, and do our own work, and find our own way, instead of living by His life, and doing His work, and taking His way.”

This morning we went, Antonia and I, for the first time, to the Holy Communion together.

“How wonderful it is,” she said, “when the living waters come, to find the channel already

there, the prayers and hymns through which for ages the life has flowed! Words which once we thought we had fathomed and exhausted, we find deep and wide beyond our conception to receive and swallow up all the adoration and delight we can pour into them.

“Ah, Monica, it seems as if, could the life only be deep enough, the faith in the Ever-living, Who is the Life, all separating controversies must vanish.

“It seemed to me to-day, as if our Lord Himself were there, having given Himself for us, now, then and there, giving Himself to me, while I offer and present my whole self, soul and body, to Him.”

And on our return the elder sister Ethel met us, and welcomed us quite tenderly, and kissed us both, me for the first time.

“It seems,” Antonia said to me, “as if until now I had never truly loved any one before. I seem to wake up in a new world of human as well as of Divine love, to have received a hundredfold, ‘father, mother, brothers, sisters,’ even here.”

Wonderful it is to stand and watch this glad and solemn glory of dawn in a human heart.

Heaven, indeed, it must be on the heights where they are always seeing this dawn, and where they know the solemn gladness of the perfect Day into which it shall deepen.

"Ah, Monica, it seems as if, could the life only be deep enough, the path in the River living, Who is the life, all separation comes must vanish."

"It seemed to me to-day, as if our Lord Himself were there, having given Himself for us, now, then and there, giving Himself to me, while I offer and present my whole self soul and body to Him."

And on our return the elder sister kissed me and welcomed us quite tenderly, and kissed us both me for the first time.

"It seems," Antonio said to me, "as if until now I had never truly loved any one before. I seem to wake up in a new world of human as well as of living love, to have received a hundredfold, father, mother, brothers, sisters, even here."

Wonderful it is to stand and watch this glad and solemn glory of dawn in a human heart.

CHAPTER XI.

Winifred's Moan-book.

"My heart is at the secret source
Of every precious thing."

ALL day that deep song of joy has been in my heart. I had been living in twilight, and I did not know it. How many of us are living in twilight, and do not know it?

And how this living in twilight must hinder the manifestation of the Light of the World to the world, the Light in which we should live and may live every moment!

If the whole Church could wake up to live in the full light of joy and holiness which is hers, it seems as if, naturally, inevitably, the whole world must wake up to see that the Sun has risen, that the Lord has risen indeed; and the Day of God would be here.

For "YE are the Light of the World," the Source of all light has said;—not the words I speak, not

even the record of Me which My disciples shall write; but YE.

Can it really be true that He said so? I must look again to be sure of the words; they seem so all-explaining, so glorious, so marvellous.

"I am the Light of the World," He said.

That is not difficult to comprehend.

"But YE are the light."

Is that, indeed, no mystical exaggeration, but eternal truth, in the sober profound words of Him who never overstrained a precept or a promise?

In the same sermon He says, "YE being evil."

No minimising in His teaching; no minimising either of our sin, or of our possibilities of victory.

And we, blundering, stumbling disciples in all ages, in all lands, of all professions, what have we been doing?

Some of us declaring that one or another external ecclesiastical government is the light of the world; some of us that the light of the world is a Book.

But, through it all, His light has never failed to shine. Through the thickest veils of ecclesiastical

construction it has shone. Since He rose worl, thed has never been left in total darkness. But why has not the world itself, by this time come to shine translucent, in total, universal, all-penetrating light?

Through the thickest screens of ecclesiastical construction it has shone; in the Divine Book, the Word of life, it has always shone, though held forth by the feeblest and most trembling hands.

Still the deeper manifestation remains.

“YE are the Light of the World.”

The Incarnate Word speaks primarily through the flesh, the human nature which He took on Him. God manifest in the flesh speaks now most manifestly in the flesh.

He who tabernacled among us visibly once, tabernacles now visibly among us through those in whom He dwells; in patient sufferers, in hearts that love, in lives that serve; in the poor who are rich in faith, in the rich who are poor in spirit.

It is no new thing, not new even to me.

But old truths live afresh in me.

Maurice lived it before my eyes. Grace lived it day by day. I have always believed it.

And yet now it seems as if I had only half believed. I never believed in any Saviour but a Saviour from sin; I never dreamed of any salvation as worth the name but a salvation from sin.

Yet now everything, every word of the Bible, every relation of human life, everything in nature, glows, becomes translucent; old familiar hymns, the Creeds, the Church Services, the Holy Communion, shine and glow through and through with a new glory and meaning to me.

This revivifying of old truths, or, perhaps, I should rather say of my heart to embrace them, has come to me through a great gathering of Christian men and women for many days together, waiting on God in prayer and praise, and searching of the heart by His Spirit, and surrender of the will to Him; and I bless Him in the depths of my soul for it.

I did not know I was living in twilight. How are we to know how imperfect twilight is, except by its deepening into dawn? If twilight could remain stationary for a few days, I suppose we should get to think it was all the daylight to be had, and read

our Scriptures, and do our work as well as we could by means of it.

I cannot say the phrase "higher life" best expresses this to me.

It seems to me simply "the life"—the normal, natural, child-like Christian life, we *all* ought to be living, not a few of us; we ought to be living *always*, and not now and then; the life which, thank God, not a few do live always.

To walk in the light is surely the simple natural order, it would seem almost the inevitable order, of Christian life.

Our Sun is not a revolving light, alternately light and dark. Why should our path be through alternate streaks of light and shadow?

It is simply, I think, the translation of the past and the future into the present, in other words, of *then* and *by-and-by* into *now*; of time, with its alternations and its decadences, into the Eternal, with its ever-living youth.

The tenses of Christian life are not mere narrative tenses. They are perfect and present. "Thou

hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, and hast made us kings and priests."

That is, we *are* redeemed, and do belong to God, now; we are not our own, but His. Dominion over sin is not a vague promise in the future, but a possibility and possession now, in and through Him who lives in those who trust Him. The consecrated, sacrificial, sacerdotal life is not for a future age or a limited number, but for the whole Church, every moment, now and for ever.

It is simply the translation of possibilities into acts. As Coleridge said, "To restore a commonplace truth to its first uncommon lustre you need only translate it into action. But to do this you must have reflected on its truth."

That is, when the Master says, "Abide in me," we say not, vaguely, "Enable me to abide in Thee," but "I do abide in Thee;" not, "I hope I shall;" far less, "I fear I shall not," but now at this hour "I do," and his response is, "*He that abideth in me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.*"

The beneficences and endurances and sacrifices

of the true, obedient life are not constructed painfully as works, but spring forth naturally as fruits.

As Alexander Knox said, from the sentence in the Litany, “‘That we may diligently live after thy commandments,’ which is much, we should advance to the following petition for ‘Increase of grace to hear meekly Thy word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit,’ which is more.”

It is not, “Without me ye can do little,” but, “Without me ye can do nothing.”

Not, “That you may have a little broken, interrupted joy,” but, “That my joy may abide in you, and that your joy may be full.”

When it says, “Ye have received the Spirit of adoption,” believe it, and look up and cry, “Abba, Father.”

When it is written, “The law of the Spirit of life has made us free from the law of sin and death,” believe it, make “an act of faith” in it, as the old devotional books say; and live as those who, being redeemed, are not necessitated to sin, need never say, “I am so weak, I cannot help it;” be-

cause having confessed that we are not only a little crippled, but utterly weak and disabled, we cling to Him who is not merely great and strong, but Almighty Strength, our strength and our shield, for ever.

When we read, "Christ *in us* the hope of glory," look up and say, "True; all but incredible; but if Thou sayest it, *true!* Thou art in us."

And then, if we continue, *as* we continue beholding Him, the Spirit who manifests Him will reveal depth after depth in Him, the Babe in the manger subject to his parents, coming not to be ministered to, but to minister; in the agony saying, "Thy will be done;" whilst the nails were being driven into the hands that had touched the leper and blessed the children, praying with self-abandoning love for His torturers; praying so as to be answered; obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

This is the Christ Who lives in Christians. This is the life which through His disciples He will manifest to the world.

This is the only argument by which the Church ever will or ever has overcome the world.

Christian life, the life of Christ in Christian men and women and little children.

Holy, immaculate, patient Lamb of God, to each one of us, can it indeed be possible thou hast committed this, even this? Tremendous responsibility, unutterably blessed possibility! To manifest Thee.

Can it indeed be true that thou hast not only promised, but commanded this? For thy command seems to me, if possible, even a stronger assurance than thy promise.

“The secret source of every precious thing.”

Living close to that well of life, nay, more—why should we hesitate to say it?—with that well of water, that secret source, actually “springing up in our hearts” (the woman of Samaria, to whom that promise was freely and immediately made, was surely no exceptional saint), how many precious things seem revealed to us!

—My eyes seem opened like Hagar’s to see so many wells around us in the desert.

It seems to me as if I had never before under-

stood how many devoted and rejoicing lives there are around me; lives really altogether poured out like the precious ointment on the feet and on the head of the Lord.

Yes, there were two alabaster boxes of precious ointment poured on Thee; one on Thy feet, one on Thy head!

One from the forgiven penitent, with floods of tears, in a silent rapture of new-born gratitude; the other from the heart of long familiar love, from the disciple who had chosen the good part, and sate at Thy feet so long, had understood Thee and been understood by Thee, loving Thee, Thee Thyself, beyond all Thy gifts, knowing Thou carest for the sacrifice of ourselves more than for all our service. One poured in depths of grateful humiliation on Thy feet; the other in ecstasy of adoring love on Thy head.

Both lavished: one from the broken vase. And I see the same, surely the eyes that watch to welcome the least ministry of love, see the same,—now, around us in this England—now.

In countless quiet Christian homes, in hospitals,

in infirmaries, in loving ministries among the fallen and the suffering, through all shades of religious conviction, through all varieties of natural character, from all grades of society, and in all forms of ecclesiastical order; I see them, not only through the softening mists of the Past, but now, close around me now, pressing to Thy feet, pouring out the life, the heart, in unreserved consecration to Thee!

The olden days of Galilee and Olivet are for ever being renewed. Of their substance, of their life, from the manger to the cross, along the common, toilsome path, along the solitary way of agony, the women minister to Thee.

So short a time ago, I was thinking how our poor dear Fan's life had widened out, while ours had apparently narrowed.

But I have found that the valley of the shadow of death is indeed only a ravine through which we are led to the wide sweet mountain pastures, to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. Through it, His rod and His staff comfort us; and

beyond it is the "table spread," "the head anointed," the "cup overflowing."

And now Fan's little gleam of sweet earthly happiness is somewhat shaded. Her husband is crippled for life by a fall in unlading a ship.

Their own cherished little home had to be broken up, and now they have come together to be mother and father to our little orphan home.

It never seems to enter into Fan's head or heart that she has anything to murmur about, or into his; although he is smitten at once from his vigorous, healthful prime into decrepitude and helplessness.

They have no conception that they are making any sublime surrender to the will of God. They simply accept His will, with the unquestioning confidence and submission of trusting children.

He commands, and they yield. He demands, and they give up.

Oh, how much of the very highest Christian life is lived in the lowest places, and lived there best, because unconsciously; because no one thinks it is anything more than the natural necessary Christian life of all!

What, in fact, as the Benedictine Mother Margaret said, is the life of faithful domestic service but this? What are the active Religious Orders but an attempt at what may be, at what often is, fulfilled by Christian servants, living in other people's homes, caring for other people's interests, having nothing, yet possessing all things? To accept is to resign; to resign is to accept. To obey is better than to sacrifice, because it is the sacrifice of the will, of the inmost self.

Old books, old sayings, old hymns come to me with new meaning. German hymns—Spitta's, Terstegen's, Gerhardt's, St. Bernard's "Jesu dulcis memoria," Zinzendorf's translation of it, Brother Laurence's "Practice of the Presence of God," that wonderful book which is not a mere book, but the last fragrance of a holy life, crushed, and rising in pure incense to heaven, Adolphe Monod's "Adieux." "La Communion Fréquente," how deep it is! And especially "*Le Secret d'une Vie simple, active et paisible.*" After speaking of the life of the Lord, "Les bonnes œuvres jetées à pleines mains non pas

les unes sur les autres, mais les unes après les autres. Nous n'avons pas l'idée de ce que nous pourrions faire si nous étions complètement perdus dans cet accord complet avec la volonté de Dieu, l'action de l'homme devenant comme une vie divine au sein de l'humanité, en qui s'accomplit quelque chose de la force de Dieu. Il ne saurait y avoir de carrière manquée si mes projets sont pris dans le plan de Dieu à mon égard."

So much of the restlessness is gone out of my life with regard to others, as well as with regard to myself.

God is no Pharaoh, no taskmaster to demand bricks without straw. If the straw fails, if the strength fails, just then He needs from us *not* the bricks, but something else, or perhaps for the moment *nothing* else, only always our will, our hearts, our selves.

The endless little attentions needed by dear Aunt O'Brien have become sweet to me. She herself becomes dearer, and it seems to me she is sweeter and more contented herself, enters into all

kinds of little plans for others with more freedom, and less worry and anxiousness.

Perhaps it is, after all, I myself, with my passion for a *carrière*, and my strong will, that have helped considerably to make this atmosphere of fret and disquiet around us.

If honestly, really, always, it is God's will we want, how can that fail?

For (unutterable joy!) the will of God is not a decree in the past, but the will of ever-present love present now! my King, my King!

I feel sometimes so curiously apart, and yet so truly in the heart of the lives around me.

My heart is really in the calm of His presence, not so much itself calm, as bathed in His calm, not so much peaceful as "kept by His peace," which seems to me more.

And, I scarcely know how, the lives of those dear to me seem more translucent, nearer to me.

Instead of the joys and sorrows of this transitory life becoming indifferent to me, they seem to become deeper. *Nothing* seems little or petty. In-

deed, nothing is petty in human life but unreality, conventionality, untruth; and the very unreality itself is so often only a glittering ice-palace or a piteous wigwam which the soul is trying to build for itself, because it has lost sight of home!

Just now we are in an era of new dawnings. The children have become men and women, and strange new attractions are drawing heart to heart; the mist of nebulae, resolving itself into a group of double stars.

I sit and watch, and wonder what will come of it; what lessons the Divine Love will teach through these sacred mysteries of the human love it has created, whether the lessons will come, to these precious ones, through privation or fulfilment, through sorrow or joy. Ah, through sweet harvests of joy, I trust! Even love fulfilled must have its sorrows. But, oh! Thou Who knowest the joy of loving and the sorrow of loving as none besides, if it may be, let these children be taught, not by negatives, but by positives; by sorrow afterwards (for that is inevitable to love on earth), but, if possible, first by joy!

To-day I have had two love-confidences.

The Felix-Hunters have been spending the day with us; Monica and Antonia; and Bertrand Hunter came to guard them home, which Eustace seemed to think a superfluous attention, as he had intended to perform that chivalrous office himself, and was not to be diverted from it.

Sweet old glamour, which is not glamour at all, but only a light, neither of sun nor moon, which melts away the unreal crusts and reveals the beautiful depths of one human soul to another.

Sweet old mystery, which no outside touch can help truly to develope; which the most tenderly penetrating, motherly eyes can only watch with folded hands, like the guardian angel in Retsch's etchings of the Game of Chess picture.

It so happened that when Bertrand Hunter arrived, Monica and Antonia had not yet returned from a walk in the woods with Eustace.

I proposed to take him to meet them, but as there was some uncertainty about the way, he seemed to think the possibility of missing them too

terrible a risk to encounter, and preferred to wait quietly with me.

Quietly, however, I cannot say he did wait. He roved, like an unsatisfied bee, from book to book and from painting to painting, until he lighted on an early drawing of Monica's in a book of mine.

"One can see the same touch," he said, in a reverential tone; "the same penetration into the hidden glory and meaning of the commonest things."

I suppose he could; but I cannot say it had previously occurred to me.

I felt as sometimes one feels with a disciple of some eccentric school of art, afraid to wound the feelings of the worshipper by coldness, and equally afraid to offend his judgment by praise in the wrong direction. For to my uninitiated eyes it was a very infantine attempt, kept evidently without a due perception of its profundities, out of a blind, maiden-auntly love to the little one who had brought it to me one birthday morning.

It was a child with a lamb; and the lamb had, I confess, seemed to me anatomically vague. But, then, so were the lambs in the early Catacombs;

and no doubt I ought to have seen the lamb-like possibilities in that rather dog-like nose and those apparently wooden legs.

"She always goes to the heart of things!" he said.

To that I could cordially agree; because I think that is just what our Monica does. Something in my tone, I suppose, encouraged him to proceed.

"Miss Bertram," he said, "I wonder if it is of the least use venturing to entertain the shadow of a hope. I am not used to think myself altogether on a low level of culture. But since I have seen this family, I have felt as if I were a kind of Australian savage; all my old cant about culture seems to drop off from me like so much ignorant and vulgar pretension. The reality of culture is with them, 'sweetness and light,' truth, a penetrative insight into the beauty of the commonest natural things, a penetrative sympathy with the commonest human lives. And," he added, in a voice tremulous with earnestness, "I am convinced that it is because in some way they have penetrated to the heart of things."

He paused for a minute, and then looking up

suddenly in my face, he added, "And more, I am persuaded that this life at the heart of things means Christianity."

My song, "My heart is at the secret source of every precious thing," came to my lips involuntarily. "That is it," he said; "I have seen it in them all; in the saintly patient mother, in the sweet, housewifely Margaret, in the very child May, with her love to animals, in the frank boy Walter, as much as in any; in all. And perhaps you do not know how much that means for me. I had persuaded myself Christianity was obsolete; on its dark side, an obsolete superstition; on its better side, a lovely, incredible myth. And here are Christians! men, women, children, boys! The thing exists, the life is there; a life which is perfectly human, is the perfect blossom and fruit of humanity, but which the human alone has never produced in its tenderness and depth. In the universality of its sympathy, —(it despises nothing;) in its lofty indifference to public opinion; in its lowly readiness to learn. It throws down all caste, intellectual or social; it reverences all real distinctions; it is the same in all;

yet it does not destroy one natural healthy variety of character. And this I have learned from them, and first of all from her."

"It is a strong link indeed between you."

He replied rapidly—

"It is a link which binds me to her and to them for ever. That need scarcely be said. But," he added with difficulty, "what right have I to ask her to bind a beautiful life like hers to mine, which has in it no such light, but is at best only a pale etiolated, fruitless leafage, shining in the reflected light of hers?"

"You speak as if you were living in a finished and fixed Divina Commedia," I said, "you fixed to this world, and she to another. As if your sphere were that dim, dumb circle, where Dante places the grand old Pagans, and where the air is heavy, not with weeping, but with sighs, who live 'in longing, but without hope;' and hers among those with the '*angelico riso*,' who are '*gioconde della faccia di Dio*.' But no such gulf divides you. *Her light is yours;* not her moonlight, but her Sun."

"Listen a moment!" he said, in a very low voice,

"I am afraid of myself. For it was not Christianity I loved first. It was Monica. And I am afraid, in heaven and earth, it is still Monica. I am afraid of bringing an untruth into my life, and, almost more, of bringing it into hers."

I ventured to say—

"I do not think untrue people are afraid they are untrue."

"You think, then, I might venture to show her what I feel for her? The affection, of course, cannot be helped."

"If you cannot help loving," I said, "I do not think she will long be able to help seeing."

"One word more," he said hesitatingly. "You think it is not altogether hypocrisy for any one to try to pray, whose prayers seem to amount to little more than, 'Make me good enough to love her?'"

"I think our wishes have touched the heart to which we pray, long before we know how to utter them," I said, "Yet I think you might perhaps improve that prayer. It would scarcely be hypocrisy, and could surely not be in vain, to ask, 'Teach me to love Him Who makes her what I love.' And," I

ventured to add, "I may be old-fashioned enough to recommend to you a form of prayer which has borne many a confused longing straight to its goal. 'Those things which in our blindness we cannot, and for our unworthiness we dare not ask, give us for the worthiness of Thy dear Son.'"

Just then there were steps in the hall, which he knew as well as I did, and we could say no more.

Monica is so little self-conscious, so intensely occupied with the subjects or people that interest her, that perhaps she may not perceive the love she has won. Yet I question very much if, during their journey home last evening, she could remain altogether blind.

I thought, perhaps, without indiscreet questioning, I might have learned something on the subject from Austin, when he returned.

But this young person is living in another world of his own, and apparently had regarded Monica principally in the light of the adoration of Antonia.

"What do you think of these girls' friendships, Aunt Winifred?" he asked. "I never saw anything like the devotion of that child to Monica."

"Would she not say anything to you?" I said.

"As Monica's brother, of course, as much as I liked, about Monica!" he replied, with a little pique in his tone. "I scarcely think that kind of adoration is altogether desirable or sane."

"She seems a dear, eager, enthusiastic, impulsive child. You know the old sayings about school-girls' friendships," I said demurely.

"There are school-girls and school-girls," he replied, turning the tables on me. "Antonia is a child in simplicity and frankness, but scarcely in anything else, and her enthusiasm is no weak effervescence. She has a deep, fervent, true nature, I feel sure. I never saw any one more single-hearted. And think out of what an atmosphere! I only know," he added, "she has done me all the good in the world. She has been to me like a glimpse into the first centuries of Christendom, like a new spring-time in the world, and in my life."

"Ah! Austin," I said, "don't be jealous of Monica. She has done good service to you. And depend upon it the heart that can love, as Antonia loves Monica, is worth waiting for."

"Aunt Win," he said, "do you think I don't know that? Do you think I don't shape every plan of my life in that direction?"

So my two love-stories are launched. I see few rocks ahead, except the rocks which that ancient impetuous river is sure enough to sweep along with it, springing from its cradle on the mountains to be the joy and freshness of the working levels of the world.

CHAPTER XII.

The Mother's Note-book.

WE are in the busy toiling old city again.

Once more all my children are under my roof.

But the old home exists no more. It is no more the nest. They sit around me, my nestlings, each with its own song on its own spray, close gathered around me; yet only perched and hovering there for the hour.

They are all around me again, all as dear as ever, as loving to each other, if possible more loving than ever to me; yet not one of them is the same.

And yet it is more than half joy to me that it is so.

They come back to me, to my inmost heart, my children; but in the inmost heart of more than one of them an inner depth has been unsealed which is not mine, and which certainly I do not wish sealed

up again. It is not that I have less, or am less to them, but they are and have more.

I am speaking as if there had been changes in our outward life. But as yet there are none.

A proposition was made us that Margaret and Monica should undertake a school recently begun for girls mostly of the middle-class.

Monica entered into it at once with an eagerness which a little surprised me, knowing how interested she was in Antonia Hunter. But I knew that she had a genuine enthusiasm for teaching, and for raising the whole tone of woman's education; and I attributed her readiness for the change simply to that, and to the happiness I know it is to each of them for us to be together.

Margaret's reluctance to leave her village work also surprised me a little.

Dorothy's hesitation in the matter perplexed me less, since I had long thought her attachment to all things Teutonic was not altogether a question of race.

However, all these mysteries were by degrees explained to me before we had been long established

in this cosy little house under the shelter of the Abbey.

In the first place, before we left Combe, Victor Hunter surprised me by a very frank and orderly declaration to me of his attachment to Margaret, which it seems did not by any means surprise my Margaret, when it was communicated to her.

With these two, things are going on in a straightforward and old-fashioned manner, as if they had understood each other all their lives, and were determined that whatever their affection is to each other it should be no disquiet to any one else.

The only stipulation is, for Lady Katharine's sake, that the engagement shall not be proclaimed for six months; so that it shall seem, as it is, a natural alliance between two distant cousins, and not occasion any complication as to Lady Katharine's scheme of village teaching.

We were still in the full confusion of unpacking and packing into our little Westminster home, when the explanation of Dorothy's Teutonic enthusiasm arrived in the person of a young German cavalry officer, one of the Von Schönbergs; and I cannot

say the rest of the world have derived much benefit from the society of these two young persons since the betrothal.

Dora's strongest continental alliance is with a young French married woman, a distant connection of the Bertram family, Madame des Ormes, who seems to combine much of the sweetness and tender grace and childlike piety which shone in the mother of Alphonse De Lamartine.

The world has grown wider to my children, and I trust the Church also, during their absences, and through them to me also.

The two other attachments are not so prosperous, or at least not so advanced.

Austin has come back to a child-like faith, greatly, I think, through seeing the light Christianity has brought into the life of Antonia Hunter.

When all seemed still misty and uncertain to him, he tried to point her out of the storm and mist to the Rock of Refuge which he knew existed, though he could not grasp it. And through her grasp of it he learned once more its solidity.

In learning this, he could not help learning the beauty and truth of Antonia's character; and a deep reverent protective affection for her has possessed his heart.

He feels no right to tell his love until he has a home to offer her. She is very young, and her heart at present seems scarcely to have room for any other affection, beyond her own family, but her love to Monica. But Austin will not change, and I think his steadfast patient affection must one day wake up a response, when he dares to show it.

With Monica it is different.

I am not quite sure if she yet knows her own heart.

One evening, a week after they returned from spending a memorable day at Mrs. O'Brien's, Bertrand Hunter startled her by letting her see his affection for her.

It was after a musical evening party; her singing had been admired, and Mr. Gregson especially had been talking a good deal to her, entering into her painting.

Monica was in the school-room, replacing her drawings in her portfolio, when Bertrand came to her and said he could bear the reticence and suspense no longer, told her how she was all the world to him, and entreated a direct answer—yes or no: anything would be better than that she should, by any misunderstanding, drift away from him, or be swept away from him, without her even knowing that with her he would lose everything.

Something in the suddenness and passionate earnestness of his manner, I think, bewildered her.

She said it seemed to her as if he were sweeping her into a pagan world,—a stormy passionate sea without a shore. She could not bear to be required to be all the world to any one. She felt as if he were reversing the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, and trying to drag her down with him into a Hades where there was no living air, no sun, no Christ; where she would have to stand on a wretched pedestal and be adored, and try for ever, in vain, to make up to him for daylight and heaven.

Her whole being at the moment seemed to fold up and shrink from him.

She could not explain it to him nor to herself. He had interested her, attracted her, from the beginning, more than any one in the house, or out of it; and now she felt as if a wall of ice had dropped down between them.

It was no struggle between religion and affection. It was a shrinking of her whole nature, in instinctive abhorrence from being, as it seemed to her, his religion, his divine life.

Religion was actually in her heart, in her inmost heart. Christ was actually the Master enthroned in the very centre of her heart; and to be asked, at once, as it seemed to her to take His place in the life of another, and leave Him out of her own, simply closed her heart.

It was as if a flood had rushed down the wrong side of a lock, and closed the gates it sought to enter.

He went away in an agony; not for an instant reproaching her, but reproaching himself bitterly for bringing disquiet into the peace of her life.

He said he saw it was hopeless; it was *himself* she shrunk from; and against that, there was no pleading. She longed to say one word to explain; but her own feeling was too dim to herself.

She could not say what she shrank from—what so folded up her heart from him.

She only felt that she would have given anything she possessed to help and comfort him, and repay him for all his generous care of her; but that, what he wanted, she was as totally unable to give him, as a bud to open itself at its own will, or any one else's will, into a flower.

And so they parted.

Soon after, Monica gladly accepted the offer of this school; and since her return she has devoted herself, heart and soul, to her work. But I think she is scarcely yet all herself, scarcely yet able to comprehend her own feeling or her own duty.

CHAPTER XIII.

Monica's Note-book.

I THINK I was right; I know I could not help doing as I did; and yet all my old bright world is haunted by his gentle words of parting.

"I know you would have helped me and loved me if you could," he said; and the voice so gentle, and the look so despairing, and yet so unreproachful!

If he had only begun with that look and that tone! But it all seemed so vehement, so absorbing, the love he gave and that he wanted.

I felt as if he were trying to drag me down into some dreadful, sunless, godless Hades. And how could I have helped him, or have been to him what he really wants, there?

But now I feel as if I were some dreadful, unloving, self-satisfied spirit who had looked over the walls of heaven (as if any such spirit could be there!) and seen a brother's spirit struggling to climb up

from the abyss, and wistfully imploring a hand or even a smile to help, and had turned away and refused; and then, turning back to heaven, had found all the songs of joy, and the very Voice that calls them forth, the Voice that said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out," lost and drowned for ever, just in that one low quiet plaint, too gentle to be a wail, too tender and trusting to be a reproach, "I know you would have helped and loved me if you could."

And I feel as if the only heavenly thing to do would be to go out, and down and down, to any depth of suffering, and seek and find him, and bring him home.

And nevertheless it seemed as if I could not, *could* not, give him what he wanted; anything, anything but that.

It is not true, whatever my perplexed heart says, that I refused to help him. I would have gone out of any paradise of mine to help him the least bit of the way up. But he wanted *me*, the whole of me; nothing else would help him but just that, just myself, and that it seemed impossible to give.

It seemed so then; yes, as impossible as to force a rosebud into a rose by an external touch, or by a sudden fire.

He said it was *himself* I shrank from. And I was sure of nothing. And I thought it must be.

But since, I have often felt it was not. I never came so near before to any one as to him. No one ever seemed so instinctively to comprehend me. There is no one in the world whom I seem so instinctively to comprehend.

When he had left, I was startled to find how the meaning died out of the ordinary family conversation. It dawned on me for the first time how much we had spoken for each other, with the quiet understanding that whatever the rest might feel, between us there was always a response. And now the words seem to drop soundless into a vacuum.

I found also, by its loss, how his watchful, silent care had surrounded me. Countless considerate kindnesses that had become common as the sunbeams and the air I breathed came back to my heart. Unnoticed they had seemed to come; but now I felt that not one of them was lost, that every one of them

had been silently penetrating into my heart, that every one of them had photographed itself unobserved in my memory.

And the house and the world did seem terribly silent and empty. And through the blank and silence kept echoing those gentle words, "I know you would have helped and loved me if you could," until it became almost intolerable to stay there. I seemed a traitor to Antonia, and to every one there. For, Antonia, I was sure, knew something had gone wrong, although she never breathed a suspicion.

It was a great relief to have what seemed the call of another duty.

I thought, in the sweet calm presence of Mother, the right and wrong of things, at all events, would become clear to me; and in the healthy atmosphere of home, and of good, hard intellectual work, all that was morbid in these self-reproaches and perplexities of mine would vanish.

Before I left the Felix-Hunters, I ventured to tell Antonia I thought she could be very much to her brother, and that I was sure he needed her, and would care for her.

"I *am* something to him," she said. And then she added, "I always wrote him the history of our readings in the Bible together, and of what you said. Until just lately," she concluded, in a hoarse, abrupt tone, "when he told me I had better not write about those conversations any more, just now."

The words pierced terribly deep into my heart. He could not take help of any kind, any more, from my hand!

I suppose my face betrayed my emotion, for Antonia hastened to comfort me by adding—

"But he says in a postscript, 'Don't be troubled, little sister, I don't, and I won't, give up reading your book. (He means, you know, the Bible.) I want it; and I find many things I want in it.'"

That ought to have consoled me entirely, I think, if my anxieties about him were so entirely disinterested.

If the help does reach him, of course, if I feel what I thought I felt, I ought to feel quite content, indeed greatly relieved, that it should reach him from another hand.

But I cannot say I do.

And yet I think it may be right that the religion and the love should get disentangled.

But all this conflict and perplexity have a very trying effect in making the history which used to be so near and so vivid to me seem a long way off.

I must not suffer this; it is weak and morbid.

The histories are *true!* Raleigh, and Tyndal, and Queen Elizabeth, and Shakespeare, and Martin Luther, and Alfred the Great *lived!* the victory over the Spanish Armada was a reality, and the discovery of America was a reality, however dim and confused and misty things seem to have become for the moment in my life. And the lives of the girls we have to teach are worth clearing and helping, whatever tangle my own life may just now have fallen into. With my whole force of spiritual nerve and muscle I will hold the Hand that has promised to lead me, and believe it is leading me, although it seems as if I were not going on at all, but stumbling and floundering, and wandering back again and again to the same bewildering point, as if in a bad dream.

And at least I can pray that my mistake, if I

made one, if it makes me miserable (and I begin to think sometimes it does), may not make him go wrong. At least it must be right to ask that.

I look out from my bedroom in this little house, which has, I think, the most poetical view in London, over the infirmary garden where the Benedictine monks used to walk contentedly, when they came to the forty years of monastic life, after which everything disquieting was to be kept from them.

Poor old monks, was that possible? Did they then love no one, in the world, or in Religion? Did all they love always go the right way? Were they always sure they had taken the right way themselves?

Could they live and not love? Could they love and not be liable to suffer?

Had everything settled into apathetic indifference for them, or had they indeed still waters and green pastures within, wherein, through every storm, their quiet spirits rested?

I know the will of God is sweetest of all, even in suffering. But when we are not quite sure we

have understood or done it, and the suffering comes from our misunderstanding and misdoing?

I should like to question the ghosts of some of the old monks who must have walked on the green turf under those beautiful grey Abbey walls, or paced the cloisters.

No doubt there were some like Thomas à Kempis among them, to whom it was true, "If thou bearest the cross, it shall bear thee in turn."

But if we have made *another* bear the bitter cross, and crossed *what God meant* for them and for us!

Often I go and stand alone, in silence, beside that tomb of the Countess Margaret of Richmond, which seems to me the inmost sanctuary of peace and beauty of the beautiful old Abbey. The quiet of the place—an island of tranquillity amidst the hushed din of the surrounding city—the quiet of the sweet, kind, tranquil, prayerful aged face, and folded hands, the very ideal of sweet and holy old age, in acquiescent and expectant repose, always distil like healing balm into my inmost heart.

I am always thankful that our Lord chose spar-

rows as the exemplary birds for us, chirping everywhere as none else do; not to be dispersed by all our din, or stifled by our smoke, pursuing their own bird-life of trust, neither sowing nor reaping, while the heavenly Father feedeth them.

Yes, your lesson and His is true. Chirp it on to me, poor little brown birds, who have no song but a chirp, and enjoy your chirpings as if they were nightingales' songs!

"Are ye not of much more value than they?"

Yes, He will, *does*, care for us.

Can He care for one of these falling to the ground, and let a human soul, through a mistake of mine, fall into darkness away from Him?

There is something wonderfully calming about those solid, old, grey walls; the generations that built them, that have dwelt within their shadow, that have been fed with their majestic beauty, that have made them live with prayers and praise!

And the generations that have gone thence from "seeing through the glass darkly," "through the mirror," in the riddle, to the "Face to face."

And in Thee even now there is no darkness at all. And Thou hast promised to lead us.

The light is not *future* to us, *only invisible*, and *not* invisible to Him whose Hand is leading us.

I will not yield to the "sentimental fallacy" about nature or history.

The whole world is *not* darkened, because I am perplexed.

The brilliant light that shines like the star of England from the great national Tower, the tower that glows like a hill in the early dawn, means something. It tells of the old "island story," with its many conquests over wrong and oppression. And neither England nor the world are to begin to dissolve, into chaos, now.

Antonia has been here. She says her brother is full of plans which he is carrying out for the education and help of the men of his works—better dwellings, allotments; and she said also Sunday classes, and reading of the Bible with them.

Surely, then, I need not disquiet myself about the effect of my mistake on him.

And, for me, it can be borne, it must be borne; and it shall.

It is over; the perplexity, the darkness are over! And perhaps these will be the last words I write in this book.

He came to see us all, to see me once more. He thought it cowardly to have a terror in the world he could not face. And he resolved to see me again, and make himself acknowledge, he said, that the world was better for my being in it, although I could not brighten it for him.

And when he came, he said something else. And we who always understood each other, from the beginning, understand each other now in the inmost depths of our hearts.

This wonderful love and joy of ours has already a history, which I think it will take us all our lives to unfold to each other; a history of mysterious life

and growth, as of something which is of our very essence, and yet is independent of our wills.

He went away from me that evening, at his own home, convinced it was entirely hopeless that we should ever be anything to each other. He was so convinced it was *himself* I could not love.

He said he felt a desperate indifference to everything, at first, as if my not being able to care for him proved his whole being worthless; and if he was below the touch of my hand, it did not matter how much lower.

And yet, he said, there was something in the thought of me which made sinking impossible.

He had grown used to looking upward and climbing up-hill, he said, through me; and the habit continued, although the hill-top seemed a barren waste, and his upward gaze met nothing but an averted face.

But still, he said, that divine upward tendency his soul had begun to acquire in loving me could not cease.

Until at last, he said, he grew able to look up beyond the blank my absence had made, upward

and upward, even into heaven. And there he saw a face, pitying and divine, and *never turned away*. He felt the love from which all love is kindled; he bowed, and recognised the will which all holy wills obey.

And at last, in an agony, he surrendered, he resigned the hope which had been his life; little indeed to surrender, he said, since all hope was already gone.

But in his inmost heart he did give me up then, to God. And a solemn peace came upon him, as of an accepted sacrifice.

And then he dared to think of me again no more as a lost joy it was anguish to remember, but as a good creature of God, which it was good to think existed for God, if not for him.

And then he ventured to come and see me again.

And then, he says, a surprise of unutterable joy awaited him. And God gave me back to him.

I *could* not come to him before, he says, because he was not ready.

God took us from each other, consecrated us to Himself, and now gives us back to each other, as it were, sacramentally consecrated, and doubly one another's because we are first His own.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE nestlings are flown. The wedding days are past. The little nest is all but empty.

The birds are gone to fill other places with the joy of their dear voices, and make other houses into homes.

Will our children, indeed, bear through the world something of our life? of thine, my beloved, who seemest often less removed from me than they are?

Words, tones, that whole life of thine, slowly distilling day by day through all the moulding of the earliest years of theirs,—a deep joy it is to me to think these are making sweet other homes and other lands!

My alabaster-box was broken, not indeed by my hands. But I do acquiesce in His will. I do thank Him that some of the fragrance gathered in it has

spread far and wide, and filled some corners of His house.

My words echo back upon me as if they had a plaint in them.

But my heart is full of content. If the old home had remained, roofed and centred as of old, these changes must have come, and would have come in the guise of joys. And now the only thing that touches them with sadness is, I know, a superstition, as if Maurice were *in the past* of the old home only, and not in the present.

He lives; and growth, with all its happy changes, is surely the law of the summer where he abides.

They were all beautiful in their way, our four weddings. Monica and Dorothy first, in the village church near Mrs. O'Brien's, Austin and Margaret afterwards in the old parish church by the river. Monica and Bertrand, Dorothy and Karl, had all the beauty of sunshine and country; pathways strewn with flowers by children, Aunt Winifred's orphans among them, the quiet entering on the new life together, in the drive home from church through green

country lanes, the return to a Paradise of blossoms and grassy slopes and trees.

Hedges bridal with hawthorn, fields like fields of the cloth of gold with buttercups, undulating woods suffused with a deep blue mist of hyacinths, banks still starred with primroses, avenues of chestnuts festive with their lamp-like spikes of blossom as if illuminated for the day, lilacs perfuming the air, laburnums "dropping wells of fire," England radiant in her beauty as any southern land, earth and sky overflowing with joy.

Karl von Schönberg said, "At last I see the land of your Shakespeare. At last I see that he was not a solitary isolated peak, towering above you into another air, but your very own. The Imogens, the Beatrices, the Queen Katharines, they lived near him then, they live among you still. That I have long learned. But at last I see Shakespeare's England; the gem set in the silver sea which he loved so passionately."

Ah, it is the *truth* the poets see. In their loftiest moments they see nothing loftier than just the inmost truth, of nature, of human life, of God.

This wonderful parable of a world!

For what is all this glory of spring but the bridal hour of nature, but the type of the true great bridals of the world?

Those young lives, those sweet maidens of mine, in their soft clouds of symbolical whiteness, what has nature so beautiful in her supremest type of beauty as this true abandonment of heart to heart, this sacred union of life with life, this love from which all the sacred things of human life flow, and which remains amidst all that can flow from it, the deepest and most sacred thing of all?

Ah, how could I, who have known it, and for the moment lost its touch and sight—even with a mother's love, quite bear to witness it, if I did not believe that this love is immortal.

“Could we forget the widowed hour,
And look on spirits breathed away
As on a maiden on the day
When first she wore her orange flower!

“When crown'd with blessing she did rise
To take her latest leave of home,
And hopes and light regrets that come
Make April of her tender eyes;

"And doubtful joys the father move,
And tears are on the mother's face
As parting, with a long embrace,
She enters other worlds of love.

"Her office then to rear, to teach,
Becoming as is meet and fit
A link among the days, to knit
The generations each with each ;

*"And doubtless unto thee is given
A life that bears immortal fruit
In such great offices as suit
The full-blown energies of heaven."*

How could I bear it, still less rejoice in it as I do, had I not the power to feel that the present of his life and mine is as real as the past, and the future dearer than the past?

"Less yearning for the friendship fled
Than some strong bond which is to be."

"O days and hours, your work is this,
To hold me from my proper place,
A little while from his embrace
For fuller after-gain of bliss.

"That out of distance might ensue
Desire of nearness doubly sweet,
And unto meeting, when we meet,
Delight a hundredfold accrue

"For every grain of sand that runs,
And every span of shade that steals,
And every kiss of toothed wheels,
And all the courses of the suns."

And it has grown to be so with me.

And I sit at the weddings of my children with a heart as truly a bride's as theirs, steeped in a sorrow and a joy born of it deeper, indeed, than any bride can know; a wife who knows by the long proof of fulfilling years what such love as this now dawning in their hearts can make of life, and knows it is waiting undimmed, nay, much more than undimmed, "kept," as the old nursery hymn says, "by a Father's hand," in the summer of love, waiting in the Father's house for me.

Festivals indeed these weddings of my children have been to me, commemorative, actual, anti-typical.

The beauty that made the other two weddings fair, was beauty for the spirit rather than for the eye.

Along the old unlovely street to the old unlovely church, with its galleries and two-storeyed pulpit, surrounded by the din and the dingy atmosphere.

Yet to me the fairest place in the world.

No picturesque groups of children strewing flowers; no sympathetic festivity of golden fields and blossoming trees and sunny skies.

It was a London summer. The trees were almost as colourless with smoke as the dresses of the poor unpicturesque people who filled the church.

But the church was full.

Dear, pale, worn faces beaming with pure joy of sympathy and love! Hearts rising out of all their own trouble and care and pain, into a sunshine of delight in our delight! Familiar faces that responded to every expression of mine; faithful eyes that through their tears saw Maurice everywhere as the centre of the whole, just as I did. Prayers of the poor, receiving in this world so little for themselves, and sublimely asking so much for us.

Princely, they seem to me, these blessings of the poor, from their destitution showering good on others. Nay! much more than princely. It is not that they are consciously saying, "We in our lifetime evil things,—our kingdom, our palaces are to come."

It is infinitely more.

It is that they are content with the will of God, now, for ever, as it is. Rich in that; rich in Him, satisfied in Him, and therefore divinely rich to bestow, through Him, all beautiful gifts on others.

Of the Christian poor this is true to the letter.

Of all the contented loving poor it is so true, I think, that our Lord must have been naturally more at home in their place, as simply in itself not the lowest, but the highest, blessing poverty, as He blesses childhood, with something like a sublime recklessness of the misinterpretations that might be made of His words.

After writing these things, I went by chance into Margaret and Monica's empty room, and there the loss of the children overpowered me, and I sat down and cried as I have scarcely cried since I was a child like one of them.

The room was just empty with the kind of emptiness that is so terribly like death.

All the body there, all the shell; and the meaning, the expression gone.

The chair on which the children sat, the bed on

which they slept, the table at which they wrote. But all their little treasures gone, the photographs, the childish drawings, the sacred symbols, of religion or of human joy, the inkstand and drawing-box, the books,—gone, like the children, never to come back as dwellers in the home.

They will come back, but never more to abide, never more to the home; never more to feel that this is the centre.

Ah, indeed, they are gone from me, in some senses, far more than Maurice!

For he has only changed his dwelling-place. They have changed their home.

Death is a changing of houses. Marriage is a changing of homes.

Wherever in the worlds far off or near, Maurice and I are together again, will be *home* to us two. But to these children the mother, dearly as we love each other, can no longer make the home. Never more!

Yes, the mother's love is indeed called to be self-renouncing, finds its fulfilment in self-renunciation more than any.

I think perhaps we scarcely take enough from the example of the blessed mother of the Lord, with her meek acceptance of the mother's renunciation, which is the true mother's crown.

Long since I wrote—

“Not for thyself, thy motherhood,
Not for thy home that life-stream springs,
For thee then, too, the higher good
Must come through death of lower things.

‘The village home, so sweet to thee,
With joys so hallowed and complete,
For him no Father’s house would be,
No limit for thy Saviour’s feet.

“The will long meekly bound to thine
Now calmly claims its sovereign place,
And takes a range of love divine
Thy mortal vision cannot trace.

“On us that mild reproof falls cold—
The words and not the tone we hear;
On thee, who knewest Him of old,
It casts no shade of doubt or fear.

“For thy meek heart has read Him true,
And bowing, wins His *‘rather bless’d,’*
Whate’er He saith unto you, do,’
Embracing as its rule and rest.

“Then through earth’s ruins heaven shines bright.
The widest sphere, the dearest home—
Save that where Christ is Lord and Light,
Were but at last the spirit’s tomb.

“Thus laying down thy special bliss,
Thou winnest joy, all joy above—
The endless joy of being His,
And sharing in His works of love.”

It is long ago I wrote those words; and only now I begin to learn them.

If it is true that “we learn in suffering what we teach in song,” I think the converse is also true, of all true song. We teach in song what *afterwards* we learn in suffering. However simple, all true song is deeper than the singer knows. “Earnestly desiring to look into” the things of which they spoke, “searching what or what manner of things the spirit that was in them did testify,” is true of all real poetical as well as prophetic utterance.

For so many years, He had been subject unto them, and now the sacred home at Nazareth was left behind, broken up for ever. Her suggestion could no longer be to the Son the indication of the Father’s will.

But His divine work was hers. Without a murmur she embraced His will, and so entered into His divine work, becoming the joyful medium of His mission: “*Whatever He saith unto you, do it.*”

And the servants did it. And for her also the water was turned into wine.

And so, doubtless, it was, again, when his mother and two brethren stood without desiring to speak with Him, and looking round on His disciples, He said, "Behold my mother and my brethren."

The home at Nazareth had expanded into the world which He was to restore to the Father's will, and to transform into the Father's House.

And in the inmost circle of that home, close to Him, she stood, and surely ever stands, who so faithfully accepted and did the will of God.

Again, for her the loss was transfigured into gain; the water was made wine.

Yes; we mothers have nothing to fear. The love we seem to sacrifice is rendered back to us transformed, enriched.

And at the cross, ah! there is no fear but that we shall meet again there! that we shall be permitted to tread the Dolorous Way together, or to stand beside our beloved there.

It was because He understood, not because He misunderstood, the depth, the self-sacrifice, the ab-

sorption in the welfare of a child, necessary and natural in a mother's love, that Jesus trusted Mary to understand Him at Cana.

It was because He has made that love the deepest, tenderest type of His own.

Yesterday, as I was sitting in Margaret and Monica's empty room in that uncontrollable burst of tears, I heard the pattering feet of May's little dog Dot trotting up the stairs.

He came and put his paws on my knee, and looked with his bright wistful brown eyes sympathetically in my face, and even licked my hands, a liberty he very seldom takes with me. I could not decline his attentions. Poor fellow! it was all he had to give.

What looked through the dog's eyes into my face? What, or who?

Several times I had met him on the stairs in unexpected places, evidently returning from self-imposed expeditions of futile search. Poor Dot! And no one could tell him how futile it was!

But now he did not hunt about anywhere with his usual "intelligent curiosity," but calmly looked in my face, as much as to say, "It is of no use. I have looked everywhere for them. They are not here. They are gone. And I suppose you do not know any more than I do what has become of them."

Poor faithful beast! How I longed to explain to him that I *do* know, that they are happy and well, and remember him, and even send him messages in their letters; and that they will come back, and he will see them again.

But there is no such revelation possible to him. Absence, to dogs, is absolute unmitigated loss.

And yet they do not forget.

That brought so many thoughts to me.

How little we, who are the highest they know, can reveal to them, whose love for us is their religion!

To them all absence must seem what death seems to many of us.

Then let us reverse the lesson. To us death is

no more a hopeless, absolute separation than any absence seems to them.

My children! what realities the places to which you have gone have become to me!

Our little Dora's German home makes Germany no foreign land to me. And the old city on the hot levels of India, where our Austin is magistrate, grows familiar. My heart lives there, and my imagination roams as freely there as in the busy English manufacturing district where Monica and Bertram are at work, or in the south London parish, where Margaret and Victor Hunter seem beginning our own life over again.

I thought I had sufficiently vivid ideas of Germany and India before. But now they live, in quite a different way, with that precious life in the midst of them.

And so, a thousandfold, is it with the "better country," to which Maurice has gone.

So little did I seem to have known it before, that when he went to it from my side, all I had

believed seemed almost to fade into a mist of fair dreams, into a meaningless refrain of sweet-sounding words.

He, the heart of my life, the life of my heart, the solid centre and bond for me of the home and the world, was no longer here, but *there*. What had I been meaning by songs, and crystal seas, and white-robed multitudes? Christ the Lord was indeed always there, and always real; and to Him I always clung, to Him I trusted Maurice. And that was infinitely much. But all the rest was dim.

But now all that life seems to have grown as real to me as Maurice himself, as our Lord Himself; its service, its joy, its work, its rest; this life not meanwhile becoming "a dream or empty show," but the reverse, more real and significant than ever, in its humblest details, as the threshold and school of that life. Not a mere introduction to be broken off, that the true story may begin, but the beginning of the true eternal history to be continued there. The unroofed home, so terrible at first, has become an hypæthral temple, open to the heavens.

And I wonder as little that more is not told us about the state of the Blessed there, as I wonder that Austin does not write to me from India,—“Mother, don’t think I have lost my memory, or my interest in you, or have become blind, and deaf, and dumb, and altogether a different being. I assure you I am still your son, and still love you and my brothers and sisters.”—Or that Dorothy does not write from Germany, “Don’t think I have forgotten English, because we speak another language here. I assure you I am quite the same as when you saw me last.” How perplexed we should be at such an inane superfluity of assurances about what we never doubted!

Of course they are the same; of course they remember us, and love us, and are caring for us, and looking forward to meet us.

Do we need, then, any more such assurances about those who are *not* gone to strange lands, or among heathen people, or among new temptations, and untried perils to body and soul, but to Christ and all His perfected Christians, who have been living, ever with Him, beyond temptation, and peril,

and change, and growing like Him these hundreds of years, who are in the home He is preparing for us? Nay, surely; infinitely less.

CHAPTER XV.

Winifred's Note-book.

THE normal, old-fashioned life of marrying and giving in marriage which I wished for Grace and Maurice's children, has come to four of them.

I rejoice greatly in it for them.

But I have arrived, lately, more at a real practical belief that the Church is really one Family, one Body, and that every true life is normal and perfect in its place in the whole, as much as a finger is normal in being a finger and not an ear.

The balancing of the claims of the individual with those of the corporate life is, I suppose, the perpetual problem of all human society; and we only succeed in solving the problem by compromise, alternately maiming the force and freedom of individual life by sacrificing it to the Unity of the Body, or dissolving the Unity of the Body by the force of individual freedom.

The Divine Government surely undertakes to solve this problem without being subject to our limitations.

With God men do not exist in masses, but in multitudes. With Him, the Father is never lost in the Sovereign; the free and perfect development of each child is as essential to His love as the perfection and unity of the whole family. That is, each subject of His kingdom is a child who has been taken home to His heart.

“Thou art as much His care, as if beside
Nor man nor angel lived in heaven or earth.”

The ideal of each one is as precious to Him as the destiny of the race.

But we must be content that it should be His ideal, and not ours.

We must not say; the ideal of woman is wifehood and motherhood, and conclude therefore that all lives which do not realise this in an earthly home are incomplete and fragmentary, good as far as they go, but for ever undeveloped.

All that makes the ideal maiden, wife, mother, is the ideal of womanhood; but I believe this ideal has been perfected in many who have not fulfilled it outwardly in the earthly type. As Miss Lavinia said to me, "There are motherly old maids as well as old-maidish matrons."

I used to think one of the graces of old-maidhood was to resign oneself to this incomplete development.

But now I have rather come to think that single life is only incomplete and fragmentary, as all human life is incomplete and fragmentary; and that the perfection of what God would have each one of us be may be attained in every condition in which He places us.

I no longer so much resign myself to Him to be as little as He wills. I give myself up to Him to be made *as much as He wills* and as can be made of me.

As that which seems to me one of the sublimest of Christian hymns—Robert Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra"—says:—

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
 The last of life for which the first was made:
 Our times are in His hand
 Who saith, 'A whole I planned,
 Youth shows but half; *trust God, see all, nor be afraid.*'

* * * * *

"All I could never be,
 All, men ignored in me,
 This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

"Look thou not down, but up!
 To uses of a cup,
 The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
 The new wine's foaming flow,
 The Master's lips aglow!
 Thou heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with
 earth's wheel?

"But I need now, as then,
 Thee, God, who moulded men;
 And since, not even when the whirl was worst
 Did I—to the wheel of life,
 With shapes or colours rife,
 Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst.

'So take and use Thy work,
 Amend what flaws may lurk,
 What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim.
 My times be in Thy hand!
 Perfect the cup so planned!
 Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!'"

It is glorious to abandon oneself to God, with
 the conviction that He will no more disregard the
 perfection of one beautiful capacity or faculty in us,

the smallest possible branch or twig or leaf or blossom, than He would disregard the perfection of the whole body, the glory of the whole garden of souls.

Whatever it may be as to English society, in the Church there are no six women per cent. extra.

And when I see how many Englishwomen there are, in this generation at least, who as a matter of fact (from whatever defect in our social arrangements, and I think that it is a very serious defect) do not marry, it is an immense consolation to me to believe that each one of them may look up with full confidence to "the Hands that reach through darkness, moulding men," and claim with a child-like trust, which the Heavenly Father will not disappoint, to be made the best and most beautiful being each is capable of being, to have His purpose, the divine ideal, fulfilled in each. No power missed, no large faculty of blessing cramped, no lovely grace stunted, no endless capacity of loving unsatisfied.

It is happy to see the rest that has come to Aunt O'Brien, and the power of working, just now that the nervous dreads which have haunted her all

her life are fulfilled, that she lies week after week, helpless and often suffering, in bed.

The thing that has paralyzed so much of her life by the fear of it, has come; and with it has come a grace and peace which casts the terror beneath her feet, and makes her victorious over the reality as she never was over the dread of it.

She never murmurs. She lies suffering and waiting rather than disturb any one. She goes forth in spirit from her couch of pain, and thinks and plans for us all.

It is as if the suffering which fetters and disables her had become really an anchor, fixing her to her rest in God, to a calm of content from which she is for the first time free to love and serve every one.

If she could have accepted the will of God for the future, in her years of anxiety and fear, as she does now for the present in her days of pain and weariness, what a joyful life hers might have been!

Thank God that it is such a peaceful liberated life now!

To-day she said to me, after a paroxysm of pain—

“Winifred, my darling, tell every one never to be afraid of God! He is pitiful and of tender mercy, and quite understands us, and what we want, and what we can bear. If I had known (as of course I ought to have known) how He can sustain when the worst comes, I should have been singing instead of mourning all my life.”

I have been making fresh acquaintance with some of my beloved German hymns.

How sure it is that all really simple and deep things deepen with our depth and grow with our growth!

As so often, the hymns and prayers, the utterances to God, soar so far above the statements about Him.

‘Wie herrlich ist’s ein Schäflein Christi werden
Und in der Huld des treusten Hirten stehn!
Kein höh’rer Stand ist auf der ganzen Erden
Als unverrückt dem Lamme nachzugehn.

“Hier findet es die angenehmsten Auen
Hier wird ihm stets ein frischer Quell entdeckt.”

And again—

“Jesum lieben macht die Banden
Aller wahren Liebe fest.”

And again—

“Ach wie theur sind wir erworben
Nicht der Sünde Knecht zu sein,
Denn so wahr du bist gestorben
Must du uns auch machen rein.”

And again—

“Da krieg ich einen Kindersinn,
Ich werd’ und bleibe klein,
Und habe davon den Gewinn
Dem Höchsten nah zu sein.”

And again—

“Wer nur hat was Jesus giebet;
Wer nur lebt aus seiner Füll;
Wer nur will was ihm beliebt,
Wer nur kann was Jesus will.”

And again—

“Nun ich will mit Freuden
Sehen was er thut,
Wie er mich wird ansehen
Weil er doch nicht ruht,
Bis er noch kann halten
Seinen theuren Eid
*Dass ich noch soll werden
Seine ganze Freud.*”

Dear quiet souls, making melody in your hearts for all time, singing unseen in the shade, making a sunshine in the shady place with your singing, how I love the solitary voices which so long since have died into the light and the glory above!

I think there is a curious confusion in many of our minds between humility and despondency, distrust of self and distrust of what God can do in us and with us.

What a difference there is between living on our religious thought of God, and living by *faith in God*, in One ever with us, not ourselves!

Of trust in ourselves we are not to have a little, but none. Of trust in God we ought to have not a little, but the fullest possible measure.

It does make all the difference in all endeavour, in all conflict, whether we expect to succeed or to fail. What army could ever be victorious which deemed it a duty perpetually to recapitulate its defeats, and to regard failure as its normal condition? What painter would ever paint his Trans-

figuration if he believed it humility to think he always must fail?

On the other hand, doubtless, no artist ever reaches his highest ideal unless his ideal is always beyond his achievement.

These seem to me precisely the balancing truths in Christian life.

The expectation of failure leads to failure.

The expectation of success, in those who are honestly endeavouring, leads to success.

But, on the other hand, for ever and ever before and above us is our ideal; the Christ Who only is holy, Who only is the Lord, and yet Who, St. Paul says, is "in" every Christian, "living" in each, and moulding each into the likeness of Himself.

But again: people say, "Certainly, if we could only live the life of faith, the life of perfect trust, we might always overcome. But who does always trust? who does always overcome?"

This drives us back into the region of formularies and abstractions. And let us be very careful we never stay there; for that land is, I believe, the birthplace of nearly all the heresies.

On that ground there is no answer to that question. We must get back to the Thou and I; the personal, the childlike.

"No one does always trust." "No one does never sin."

And nevertheless Job said, thousands of years ago, "Though He slay me, yet *will I trust* in Him."

And we call that, not presumptuous, but sublime.

Would it be more simple, more childlike, more sublime, to say, "Father, I cannot be sure that I will trust Thee next year, or even to-morrow?"

Is that trusting now?

Whom can you not be sure you will trust? Will He change next year or to-morrow?

And again; in the *Te Deum* the Church has been singing for nearly two thousand years, "Vouchsafe to keep us this day without sin." Has the Church through all these centuries been vaguely aspiring after an impossibility?

Or, if we are to go on praying for it, are we to pray for it really in faith, that is in hope, every day in hope, because our faith and hope for to-day are

not based on our own yesterdays, nor on the yesterdays of the universal Church, but on Him who is able to keep us without falling!

Surely, surely, the tone of the Psalms, of the Epistles, of the last conversations of our Lord with the disciples, is in a much higher key of confidence and joy than the majority of religious books!

St. Paul, with the possibility of the most terrible failure before him, as surely it is before us all, fought *therefore* not uncertainly, not vaguely, not as one that beateth the air, contending with shadowy, unattainable, unconquerable foes, but as one that expected to be more than conqueror. "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Christ Jesus our Lord."

Never let us be entangled into abstract statements, or formulated party cries.

But never let us give up for a moment the attitude of adoring, confiding trust, or the hope which maketh not ashamed.

For, did our Lord mean to set before His Church an unattainable impossible ideal to strain after and sigh after in vain for ever, when in the night before

He suffered He said, "Abide in me and I in you, so shall ye bring forth much fruit. That my joy may *abide* in you, and that your joy may be *full*?"

Did He mean what He said when in those tender, restrained, measured words of last counsel He told the disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go away, I will send the Comforter unto you, and He shall abide with you for ever?"

Did St. Paul find it true, and St. John, in those their wonderful words of hope and power which seem to strain to bursting the harp strings of all human language?

Whatever we believe, let us believe that our Lord means us to overcome, and begin every morning of our lives, and meet every temptation, with the conviction that if we look to Him He will overcome in us, for us, "because greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world."

It seems to me so strange and wilful, this fighting about the titles Protestant and Catholic. Does not truth of all kinds continually advance through

the one to the other? Galileo's astronomy has now to be taught in Jesuit colleges; the rotation of the earth round the sun from a Protestant has become a Catholic truth. Athanasius, the most absolute of Protestants—Athanasius *contra mundum*—has become the great representative of the Catholic dogma of the Trinity.

For God to dwell in us as His Temple is indeed unutterably much. But for us to dwell in His Presence as the Universal Temple is even more.

Our religion must not consist, as it were, in possessing ourselves of bits of His Presence to enshrine apart for our own separate delight, as a secret joy to indulge in, rather than a Divine common Life to inspire us. In this way the Tabernacle of Life itself might soon become a reliquary of dead delights.

Let us not so much take even His love as a secret joy to delight in, as give ourselves up to His love and dwell in it, as in healthy open air, in the vivifying common sunshine, underneath the all-embracing æthereal sky, which touches and unites us all.

Wherever caste, in any form, creeps in, exclusive claims to peculiar privilege, then, I think, Christianity, in its glorious loveliness and uniting life, dies out.

People trouble themselves a great deal about "partial truth" and "germs of error."

But that truth should be "partial" in its reception into our limited being seems to me as inevitable as that we are finite, or that we are sinful.

None is good but God, and we only in measure as we dwell in Him. Christ only is "the Truth," the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth. His full-orbed holiness and truth can only be absorbed and reflected in the full orb of the whole Catholic Church; in her individual members, even the most saintly, only as through a prism.

And as to "germs of error," I think they are inevitably mixed up with every handful of good grain we sow. I am sure they are inevitably concealed in every clod even of good ground in which we sow it.

If once the spirit of judging, instead of the spirit

of learning, possesses people, I believe there is not an Epistle of St. Paul's in which (if they dared say so) they may not detect "extreme statements," or a sermon of St. Peter's, in which they may not moan over "defective doctrine."

It is a tremendous claim for any mortal, sinful creature to make, to be "*sound*;" sound, I suppose, as a bell of perfectly-combined metals, and without flaw, is sound! Does any earthly bell ring thus sound and true to angelic listeners?

All our hope of perfect truth, it seems to me, lies in living as members of the one Catholic Church, seen and unseen, of all ages, in which all the truth is orb'd; and in keeping close to the heart of Him from Whom all the truth she reflects shines.

And our chief security from "germs of error," it seems to me, consists in getting fresh air and sunshine for the good grain, that it may grow and bring forth fruit, and choke the tares.

Sowing and growing are our part, not pulling up evil germs or tares.

Or, perhaps, to pursue the image further, even

sowing and growing, in the deepest sense, are not our part, but God's.

In the fullest sense the sower is the Son of Man; and we have but to take His yoke upon us, as the oxen, and tread out His furrows.

In the fullest sense it is God Who giveth the increase, and causes the growing; and we have only, as Goethe says, "to do willingly what the flower does unconsciously," spread ourselves to the light and drink it in.

The thing I dreaded with unutterable dread has come on me at last.

The timid tender heart that loved me so tremblingly, but so dearly, has ceased to beat. The long struggle is over. The last link with my earliest childhood is broken; the last who knew me from the beginning is gone.

Aunt O'Brien passed away from us a month since. And the great beautiful house seems empty. And I am left alone in what used to seem to me this dreary Paradise, which I dreaded more than any purgatory with which I could be threatened.

She came at last to trust and obey so simply; and, in consequence, her unfettered heart flowed out in such a childlike gush of love and joy, that it is easy to think of her in the Paradise to which we believe she has been taken.

Yet, strange to say, sadly as I miss the dear feeble voice, my lonely Paradise has ceased to be a terror and a dreariness to me.

It is walled around by no impassable barriers, and separated by no gulf from the wilderness. Its rivers are ponded back into no dreary marsh, but may go forth whither they will, that is, whither God wills, to water the whole land.

Endless possibilities of blessing and help, of the joy which "makes all other joys go less," "the joy of doing kindnesses," open before me, in the life my God will make for me. For, most surely, my life is not now to begin to be a Palace of Art which I am labouring "to build unto myself" for "a lordly pleasure-house."

Naturally, not in confusion, one on the other, as I should manage it, but "*à pleines mains l'un après*

l'autre," He will fill my life, day by day, with such services as He permits and commands. If I trust Him, He will make my life, my single life, evermore grow and blossom as sweetly with His fruits, as even my Grace's, with her children and her grandchildren, her sons and daughters who arise and call her blessed, with her blessed wedded home-life in the past, her rich motherly family life in the present, her imperishable hopes of fulfilment and meeting in the future.

* * * * *

It is over now. And thank God Harry Leigh did not lose his way in life; neither he, I think, nor I. And surely he has not missed the way into the life of the spirits perfected.

A letter reached us speaking of health a little shattered, and with what seemed to us a forced cheerfulness, of evil to come out of good, inasmuch as the West Indian climate was pronounced unfavourable for him, and he had heard of a country practice which he thought would suit him.

And then just a little allusion, which perhaps no

one but I understood, to a country practice once having been thought by his friends the best career for him.

And then he came home, and from Southampton came a telegram to Grace which perplexed her much, asking her to come and meet them.

I felt sure Harry must be very ill to have yielded to this, seeking, as it were, his widowed sister's protection. And I went with her.

There, we found them, in one of the smaller inns, in a little dingy back room. They could not afford anything more spacious; he and the bright little Canadian wife, and the four children (two had died), she full of tenderness, but evidently little aware of what we saw in a moment but too plainly, and unable to give up the long habit of depending on his wisdom and ability, seeking his will and direction in every trifle.

Oh, how changed he was, and the unmistakable cough, and the unmistakable terrible hopefulness about himself.

We took them all at once to our rooms in the

larger hotel, and, in the airy spacious rooms, he seemed to breathe again, in every sense to breathe again.

To me he said—

“You see, I am coming to my true destiny, after all,—to the country practice, to healthy open-air life, the service of the poor, the rides over the moors.”

How it smote my heart; all so evidently for ever past for him!

He suffered us to bring him to us, to Aunt O'Brien's house, for a time, “while arrangements were being made for his new country home.”

It touched me to see his anxiety that the children should find a place in our hearts, to excuse anything that might be unconventional in their ways. For his Thérèse he was too loyal to think any excuses needed. And indeed they were not. She found her way at once to our hearts, by her child-like vivacity, her dependence, her trust in him, above all by her devoted love to him.

“I think she has made me a little wiser and

better," he said one day playfully, "just by believing me altogether wise and good." Whilst she, on her part, resented the possibility that he could ever have needed any improvement.

But indeed he had grown wiser, better, nobler. Thank God, he had not missed his way.

He felt quite sure I had not missed mine. I believe not. I would indeed have given up all, for the old life we had once hoped for. And yet I believe we have neither of us missed our way.

Now and then some little casual word could not but open the existence of that world which had once existed for us two alone, whose keys were in no other hands.

But he has gone to a world where we shall understand each other perfectly, where *all* the past will be sacred, where all the way through this great wilderness may be looked back over together, and the times when we were suffered to hunger, as well as those when He fed us with manna, shall be seen to have been all, all, His good way by which He led us home.

And his Thérèse and her children remain with us, committed to Grace and to me as to two grandmothers, to love and cherish, oh how dearly! for his sake.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Mother's Note-book.

I WONDER if any one loves "In Memoriam" as I do,—a "Vita Nuova" of our age, it seems to me,—inspired to divine vision, as Dante was, by a pure human affection.

The years have opened and open it slowly to me, in some measure as they open the Book of Books, THE human and Divine Book.

Tossed back again and again to the abysses of doubt, and darkness, and death; again and again it presses upward to the light and the life, and each time into fuller light, and higher life, until it rises to the great Christian hymn with which it begins.

The subtle seeming repetitions which are not repetitions, but the subject advancing through ever deeper harmonies to its full power; the delicate interweaving of exquisite pictures with the anguish, because through all the tears the true poet's eye cannot

help seeing, and seeing truly; the mirroring of the tumultuous thought of the times, or rather the tossing of the heart itself on the tumultuous waves of the times; and yet the gathering of all the storm and tumult into music; the "beating the music out;" and then, the music to the ear as well as to the heart!

Great poem on immortality; terrible doubts awakened by love; faith, again enkindled by love, and rising to the Divine Incarnate Love which reconciles all things to and in Itself. Thank God it was written, and for him who in the Sanctuary of Sorrow learned to sing it.

We are settled at last, my sister Winifred and I, in what is, I suppose, to be the last sojourning place of our Pilgrim's Progress, waiting beside the "ancient river" for the messengers to summon us across it home.

And I must say it does very often seem like Bunyan's "Land of Beulah" to me.

Heaven seems so close, and all who are there; and at the same time earth, and all who are there,

seem nearer and dearer than ever; its sorrows more touching and more teaching, its joys sweeter and deeper, and more worthy of being the foretastes and antitypes they are.

I think people need to understand more of all human hearts, and of our Lord's, who deem it strange that He should have wept with the sisters of Bethany over the sorrow He was so soon to heal.

All sorrow surges up to the heart which knows sorrow, in the touch of *any* sorrow; as the possibilities of the ocean are in the rock-pool it fills from tide to tide. And just *because*, in the measures of eternity, all affliction is but light, and but for a moment, one moment of sorrow may be deep and weighty with links and lessons for eternity.

We are living in a kind of natural free community in Winifred's home, the paradise she so dreaded, in which she now so delights.

It has all come about naturally; growth, not construction.

Shall I call it an English country house, with its central hearth of a cultivated home: and its wide

hospitality to all nations and classes? or shall I call it a Christian Fraternity, "Little Sisters of the Poor," "Brotherhood of the Free Spirit?" It is something of both.

Years ago I remember our being struck with these words of Renan's in "Les Apôtres":—

"C'est en songeant au monde romain qu'on est frappé des miracles de charité et d'association libre opérés par l'Eglise. Jamais société profane, ne reconnaissant pour base que la raison, n'a produit de si admirables effets.

"La loi de toute société profane, philosophique, si j'ose le dire, est la liberté, parfois l'égalité, jamais la fraternité. La charité, au point de vue du droit, n'a rien d'obligatoire; elle ne regarde que les individus; on lui trouve même certains inconvénients, et on s'en défie. Toute tentative pour appliquer les deniers publics au bien-être des prolétaires semble du communisme.

"Quand un homme meurt de faim, quand des classes entières languissent dans la misère, la politique se borne à trouver que cela est fâcheux. Elle montre fort bien qu'il n'y a d'ordre civil et politique

qu'avec la liberté; or, la conséquence de la liberté c'est que celui qui n'a rien et qui ne peut gagner rien meure de faim. Cela est logique; mais rien ne tient contre l'abus de la logique. Les besoins de la classe la plus nombreuse finissent par l'emporter. Des institutions purement politiques et civiles ne suffisent pas; les aspirations sociales et religieuses ont droit aussi à une légitime satisfaction.

“Le Christianisme primitif peut se définir comme une grande association de pauvres, un effort héroïque contre l'egoïsme, fondé sur cette idée que chacun n'a droit qu'à son nécessaire, que le superflu appartient à ceux qui n'ont pas.

“La vie commune, partir de la seconde moitié du moyen âge, ayant servi aux abus d'une église intolérante le monastère étant devenu trop souvent un fief féodal ou la caserne d'une milice dangereuse et fanatique, l'esprit moderne s'est montré fort sévère à l'égard du cénobitisme. Nous avons oublié que c'est dans la vie commune que l'âme de l'homme a goûté le plus de joie. Le cantique, ‘Oh, qu'il est bon, qu'il est charmant à des frères d'habiter ensemble,’ a cessé d'être le nôtre. Mais quand l'in-

dividualisme moderne aura porté ses derniers fruits; quand l'humanité, rapetissée, attristée, devenue impuissante, reviendra aux grandes institutions et aux fortes disciplines; quand notre mesquine société bourgeoise, je dis mal, notre monde de pygmées, aura été chassé à coups de fouet par les parties héroïques et idéalistes de l'humanité, alors la vie commune reprendra tout son prix. On retrouvera du sens aux paroles de Jésus et du moyen âge sur la pauvreté."

With us there was no design of founding any institution. But Winifred went quietly on from step to step; there was life in the work, and it has grown.

First, the orphanage for girls, and a second for their little brothers; then the convalescent home, in one and another of the fields belonging to her; then, the need of more help in the work, and workers joining us from various families around; then the work growing with the workers; and a home for those who could devote themselves more directly, which has become a training home; again, other

families gathering round to help; always the work attracting workers, and always again the hearts of those at work expanding the work.

So the cluster of good fruits has grown year by year, until we are able to render help to other parishes, in the city, or in the country, through nurses, teachers, deaconesses, trained here.

And, through it all, the centre remains an English home, with May in it, and her dogs, and her mission for the animal world; this home, which Winifred thinks I have much to do with creating, though to me it all seems hers.

Yes all hers, our own Winifred's, because she is so entirely not her own, but Christ's and ours.

Our own Winifred; yes, she is the centre of all, though, if she ever admits it, she says it is just because "she has no peculiar gifts; her gift is absence of gift, so that she can be just an open hand to gather and distribute other people's gifts."

But the faculty of gathering and distributing, of uniting and discriminating, is just hand and heart,

the administrative faculty, the *charisma*, the Divine gift of governing, so often, in little spheres or in large, among the Divine natural gifts of womanhood.

For, through her sympathy and care we are not only a community of servants of the poor; all kinds of gifts are recognised.

There is leisure and room for all.

Music and painting, history and poetry, all sacred Muses, have their high place among us. And many a bright career of healthy artistic work has begun from its loving recognition here.

We are delivered from the burden of making either work or play for ourselves. Both, as in all true natural lives, come naturally. We never have to look around for methods either of employing or of amusing ourselves.

Love, as is the wont with love, necessarily and insensibly leads to self-renunciation; and from self-renunciation comes the only true possession, that of the children and servants of the Possessor of heaven and earth. All things become ours when we cease to be our own.

Natural, friendly, social intercourse with families around, and delightful attraction hither of hearts enkindled to Christian service from far and wide throughout the world.

For, thank God, ours is but one little light-point among the thousand in our Christendom.

Our children come and go, bringing their children. Austin and Antonia have taken possession of our little home near the Abbey, working in the poor districts there, supplying us with interest and employment in abundance, and with a city centre.

Margaret and Victor in their seaboard parish make the seaside home for our sick and convalescent.

Bertrand and Monica constitute an emigration home for us in the busy manufacturing north.

Dorothy and Karl send us fresh air of thought and work from Germany.

Now and then Dora's friend Madame des Ormes stays a little while with us, and gives us glimpses into the Christian work of another Communion. And often we are joined by friends and fellow

workers of other Protestant Communion. For it is our deep conviction that whilst the Anglican Church, unburdened with claims to infallibility or supremacy, and heir of all the Christian ages, may be the widest, freest, and most fruitful Communion in Christendom, she may, if by our narrow-heartedness we degrade her gifts for all men into exclusive privileges apart from all, become to us a mere insulated prison.

For, thank God, we are His freemen, free of all good and beautiful things in Christendom, in the world, by virtue of the freedom of the City of God, by virtue of belonging to Him who, being the Light of the world, is, we believe, the source of all light in the world.

Not, indeed, that our path is all smooth or level. It is often rough, and always uphill; often through storms, and always through the dry and thirsty land where no water is.

But the Pillar of Fire and Cloud goes before us, and the Rock with the living waters follows us all the way.

Not that His Presence hides us from ourselves

in a dazzling haze. It reveals us to ourselves, depth after depth of emptiness and unworthiness. But it pierces the sin only to heal; it reveals the void only to fill it.

Not that we are floated through the world in a mystic trance; but as we strenuously press on, step by step, uphill, one step after another, the Divine paradoxes are fulfilled to us. "To those who have no might He increaseth strength. They run, and are not weary; they walk, and are not faint."

His Presence does go with us, and through the pain, and through the toil, and through the manifold changes of this transitory life, does "give us Rest."

Thank God, we are afraid of nothing; afraid of no temporal loss, because the great joy of possessing is the power of giving, and no loss can divest us of the power of giving our best gift—ourselves; afraid of nothing evil, because it is conquered, and being conquered, and to be conquered wholly; certainly of nothing good, on account of its happening to be entangled with evil; afraid of no light on account of its happening to be dimmed by darkness, or

coloured by imperfect human media; because the good is sure, sooner or later, to be disentangled from the evil; because the light, the day, the Sun of Righteousness, the Eternal Light of the World must overcome.

So we serve in the old service and sing the while the old immortal apostolic hymn—“*All things are yours, whether the world,*” for He loved it, and overcometh it, overcometh its evil by His overmastering love; overcometh its imperfect truth and beauty to His perfection, “*or life,*” it expands into His eternal, life, “*or death,*” it is, stage after stage, but the gate into higher life; “*or things present,*” He is King of Kings now; “*or things to come,*” He is Lord of Lords for ever,—“*All things are yours,*” because He has redeemed you, and ye are not your own, because you have surrendered yourselves to Him and are His own. “*All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*”

THE END.

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